WELLINGTON'S CAMPAIGNS

1808-15

ALSO

MOORE'S CAMPAIGN OF CORUNNA

PART I

1808-9-10-11

ROLEIA TO ALBUHERA

MAJOR-GENERAL
C. W. ROBINSON, C.B.

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PENINSULA—WATERLOO

1808-15

ALSO MOORE'S CAMPAIGN OF CORUNNA

(FOR MILITARY STUDENTS)

BY

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WITH SKETCH MAPS, AND PLANS

PART I

1808-9-10-11

ROLEIA TO ALBUHERA

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PREFACE

SINCE the Fourth Edition of this Part of WELLINGTON'S CAMPAIGNS came out, Volume VI. of the *History of the British Army*, by the Hon. J. W. Fortescue (1910), Volume IV. of Oman's *History of the Peninsular War* (July 1911), as well as some other contributions to the literature of the Peninsular Campaigns, between 1808 and 1811 inclusive, have been published.

To the information to be gathered from the above sources attention has been given in this Edition, so far as, having regard to the scope and purpose of the present work, appeared to be necessary.

C. W. ROBINSON.

January 1912.

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INTRODUCTION

THE object of these pages * is to bring together from the larger standard histories of the Peninsular and Waterloo campaigns, a concise military account of the main British operations (with any necessary reference to Spanish ones affecting them), such as will not only explain these to the general reader, but also be adapted to the wants of military students.

Certain simple principles of war, with an explanation of how these and the topography of a country influence the operations of modern armies, and affected those in the Peninsula, have been added in Chapter II.

Full military comments upon all the movements are given, which in brief histories and epitomes of the war are sometimes little entered into, and occasionally find no place; but it has been borne in mind that there is no advantage in clothing these in too technical language, and that in comments

* Based, as far as the Peninsular War is concerned, upon lectures given at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, in past years, subsequently revised and published, after visits to some of the battle-fields, under the title of *Strategy of the Peninsular War*, 1808–14.

it is wise to keep mainly to what has been said by critics who have the right to speak from knowledge and experience, especially the experience of war.

War is not an exact science. Unforeseen occurrences, and public interests other than military, frequently fetter every leader, for he is not only often compelled to act as he best can under surrounding circumstances, and not as he would choose, but must conform, if he is loyal, to the instructions of his Government and to the spirit of its policy. To decide justly, by mathematical diagrams and general rules, what he should have done, is not possible; and I may add here that these pages are drawn up upon the general principle that what is learnt by following a few important campaigns throughout, and examining the lessons they convey, remains, in all probability, more fixed upon the mind than what is acquired by first studying maxims of war, and then their illustrations, taken from detached incidents in very many campaigns.

With respect to battles, I have given briefly their distinctive character, with simple battle plans. To enter, except in a few special cases, into the part borne in them by particular divisions, brigades, and regiments, or to discuss the handling in combination of the "three arms"*—

* It is usual to speak of the "three arms"—artillery, cavalry, and infantry—but there is practically a fourth, the Engineers, who, under Wellington's general instructions, planned, traced, and supervised the famous lines of Torres Vedras in 1809-10, and were active throughout these campaigns.

matters which pertain to the very large subject of "tactics"—would be to attempt to do, and to do imperfectly, what, in its nature, is beyond the scope of this book. Any exhaustive examination into the details of Wellington's battles and sieges, from Roleia to Waterloo, would fill, not one volume, but several.

As a preparation, though, for such an examination, I have given the object with which each battle was fought; the chief commanders, and (in round numbers) the forces on each side; the general character of the positions taken up; the main features of the battle; its results; and the chief lessons taught by it, mentioning also the approximate losses suffered, and, as of interest, the medals, clasps, or battle-honours awarded for it.

In the battle plans, while the aim is to keep them clear, a few more places, and other particulars, are sometimes inserted than may be essential to illustrate the text, in order to render them of further use to those reading about these battles in more detailed histories.*

The campaigns of Wellington teach British students some valuable lessons, which those between the armies of Continental nations cannot equally impart, because the former give the experience of British leaders, commanding British troops, carrying on war under a British military system and form

* Whenever it has been seen that maps in standard works upon the war differ (as they sometimes do) upon any point, reference has been made to the official Spanish and French surveys.

of government, and yet usually in co-operation with other Powers, whose troops are not bound by the same conditions. They illustrate, in short, the circumstances, and special difficulties which will almost always surround British officers in any European war in which they may be engaged.

They have contributed to raise the prestige and fame of British arms, and strengthen the Empire; and they teach the value of sea-power, and a close accord between the Navy and the Army.

For these reasons they appear to form the best foundation for the study of military history by British officers and students. But, further than this, they were conducted by great Captains, under conditions which, not forgetting the advance of modern science, are still, with certain reservations, those of our own day.

All authorities of note, though differing in their view as to how far back soldiers should go in military history in order to gather from the past lessons applicable to the present, seem agreed in this, that from the period when the conditions of war compelled all organized armies to protect a long line of supplies—in other words, from the days of Wellington and Napoleon—the principles of moving armies, when beyond the range of modern weapons, have little, if at all, altered, though the manner of applying these principles may be different.

To illustrate what is meant:—

In the days of Wellington and Napoleon it was one accepted principle of war to carefully guard

the "line of communications"—*i.e.* the line along which the army communicates with its sources of supply (of stores, men, etc.). Another was to threaten the enemy's when possible.* Napoleon wrote, in his *Maximes de Guerre*:—"The most important secret in war is to make oneself master of the communications. . . . One ought never to yield up one's line of communication; but to know how to change it is one of the most skilful manœuvres of the art of war."

Now the above principles are as applicable to-day as when they were written; indeed, they become, as armies increase in size and require more munitions of war to render them efficient, more vitally applicable. We see commanders in our most modern campaigns, including those of the forces of Japan and Russia in Manchuria in the late war, recognizing their truth and acting upon them, but we find no more clear and striking illustrations of their value than in the campaigns of Wellington and Moore. Moore, by his advance against Napoleon's communications in the campaign of Corunna in 1808, entirely altered the course of the war and frustrated Napoleon's plans; and by his change of communications from Lisbon to Corunna withdrew his army from the dangers which surrounded it. Wellington changed his own line of communication from Portugal to St. Ander, in the north of Spain, in 1813; and then, at Vittoria, paralysed Joseph's army by

* See pages 23-27 for the reason of this, which is a very simple one.

seizing his line (through Bayonne), and capturing all his guns, stores, and treasure.

To explain the difference in the power and manner of applying the above principles in Wellington's day and our own, it may be said that the power of Wellington or Moore to change their communications with England from one harbour to another, in Spain or Portugal, rested mainly upon British command of the sea. To-day the importance of sea-power in this respect would be as great as ever, while the certainty and rapidity with which such a change could be made by those possessing sea-power have increased since the introduction of steam.

In Wellington's day, in land operations, the comparative rapidity with which a leader could reach a point upon his own communications to defend it, and his adversary to attack it, depended mainly upon the time in which the troops of each *could march* to that point (see Note, page 83). To-day it would probably depend more upon the relative advantage one might have over the other in the possession of railway lines and motor transport. The telegraph and telephone, facilitating the transmission of orders, the balloon and aeroplane facilitating reconnaissance and rendering surprise difficult, may in various directions affect the power and manner of applying the above principles, but not their truth and value.

When Sir John Moore changed his line of communications from Lisbon to Corunna in December 1808, it was the fact that England held the command of the sea which enabled him to do so.

When Lord Wolseley changed his line from Alexandria to Ismailia in the Egyptian campaign of 1882, the command of the sea and the co-operation of the fleet were as necessary to him as they had been to Sir John Moore. Both put in force the same principle of war. The results were in both cases great; but, in the latter case, what the fleet could accomplish in a given time was to be calculated upon with more certainty than in the days of Moore, owing to the introduction of steam, while it was more difficult to keep the plan secret owing to the greater rapidity with which news is at the present day transmitted.

To take another illustration. Napoleon wrote, "To operate from directions wide apart, and between which there is no direct communication, is a fault which generally leads to others" (though, he adds, that it may be occasionally necessary or advantageous). This, again, as a principle, may be said to be as applicable to-day as when it was written; but there is this difference, that now armies, separated by impassable obstacles or long distance, may yet be in constant communication by telegraph—aware of each other's exact position, and the news which each has of the enemy. This greatly lessens the danger of their being attacked at a disadvantage.

But should the telegraph wire get out of order, or be cut—an occurrence which may at any time happen—they are, for the period it remains so,

in much the same position as they would have been in the time of Napoleon.

Illustrations of this kind might be multiplied, and Sir J. F. Maurice writes,* "A soldier who has never considered how, or why, Napoleon triumphed over his opponents, and when and why he failed, would have very little chance of solving aright the problems of a modern campaign."

Wellington, and those trained in his school and in that of Moore—Hill, Picton, Cole, Beresford, Uxbridge, Colborne (Lord Seaton), the Napiers, John Jones, Fletcher, Burgoyne, Frazer, Dickson, Hew Ross and others, well-known names, some famous, in English story—were the contemporaries or adversaries of Napoleon and the soldiers of his school—Soult, Junot, Massena, Ney, Marmont, Kellermann, Milhaud, and others of much distinction—from 1808 to the final triumph of Wellington over Napoleon himself at Waterloo; and this consideration is of itself a reason why British military students should study the campaigns of Wellington and Moore against Napoleon and his marshals, which remain to this day models for British soldiers.

* *War*, by Sir J. F. Maurice.

WELLINGTON'S CAMPAIGNS

THE PENINSULAR WAR (1808–14) IN PORTUGAL, SPAIN, AND SOUTH OF FRANCE

CHAPTER I

ORIGIN OF THE WAR

By the year 1807 the power of Napoleon I., Emperor of the French, was at its height. In a series of successful campaigns he had gained brilliant victories over Austria, Prussia, and Russia, and the whole continent of Europe stood in terror of his military genius, and of the immense armies which he led.

At this time England was the only powerful enemy actively opposed to him. Her navy, under Nelson, had two years previously almost completely destroyed the French fleet at Trafalgar; and Napoleon, without a fleet, being powerless to invade England, had formed the design of subjugating her by ruining her commerce. To this end he called upon other nations, upon pain of his serious displeasure, to close their ports against British vessels, and prohibited all commerce and communication with England.* The European powers stood in too great fear of Napoleon

* Berlin Decree, November 21st, 1806.

to openly oppose his wishes; but Portugal—a kingdom well inclined towards England, and which carried on with her a very profitable trade—did not discontinue her intercourse with sufficient promptitude to satisfy the French Emperor.

Moreover, during the campaign of Jena in 1806, Napoleon had reason to suspect that Spain, though an ally of France, was not a sincere and true one; and in 1807 he had become especially incensed with England for having, in an expedition to Copenhagen in that year, seized the Danish fleet.*

By referring to Map I. of the Peninsula and south of France (facing the Title-page), it can be seen that the Spanish Peninsula joins on to France. The French Emperor therefore considered, that if, when he was engaged in some war to the eastward of France, Spain and Portugal were to side against him, and unite with his great enemy England, he might be placed in an embarrassing position. Having now comparatively no navy, he could not attempt to prevent a British army from being landed upon any part of Portugal or Spain; and this army, once landed, could unite with Spanish and Portuguese troops, and, marching in combination with them, attack France from the south, in which case he would have had enemies both in front and rear.

These considerations, joined to ambition, determined Napoleon to attempt the possession of the Peninsula; and to gain his object he entered upon

* Owing to the discovery of Napoleon's design (under a secret clause of the Treaty of Tilsit with Russia, July 7th, 1807) to secure both it and the Portuguese fleet for his own purposes.

a course of treachery which circumstances peculiarly favoured. Spain was at the time governed by Charles IV., an old and weak-minded King, the tool of an unscrupulous minister named Godoy, and upon openly bad terms with his own son, Ferdinand VII., and the country was much distracted by the quarrels continually going on between the party of the King and Godoy, and the party of Ferdinand. Having succeeded in bribing Godoy, Napoleon, through his influence, persuaded the King to enter upon a secret treaty with him (Treaty of Fontainbleau, October 27th, 1807). By this treaty, which was one of the blackest treachery towards Portugal, a French army was to be permitted to enter Spain; Spanish troops were to join it, and the combined armies were to seize upon Portugal, it being a condition that that kingdom should be subsequently partitioned between Spain and France, and that Godoy should have a principality in it.

A pretext for a rapid advance into Portugal had also been found in the following way. Napoleon, in August 1807, demanded from her, as proof of her friendship, a declaration of war against England, the confiscation of all British merchandise, and the arrest of British subjects. Portugal, through fear, did not refuse this proof, but she allowed herself to venture a remonstrance, and upon this simple remonstrance a French army was at once moved forward, and had crossed the frontier from France into Spain on its march towards Portugal a few days before the Treaty of Fontainbleau was signed.*

* Oman, *History of the Peninsular War*, vol. i. p. 7.

The general who led it (Junot) was instructed to say that he came in no hostile spirit towards the Portuguese, but was merely determined to carry out Napoleon's orders, that the British should be at once excluded from the country. Uncertain as to the real intentions of Napoleon, and dreading his power, Portugal made no resistance. The French then quietly occupied Lisbon, the Prince Regent of Portugal and his court having left with the Portuguese fleet for the Brazils. The Spaniards soon entered and took possession of other parts of the country; the Portuguese army was partly disbanded and partly sent abroad; and the subjugation of Portugal became complete.

But the turn of Spain was only deferred. Napoleon having got one army into the Peninsula, obtained permission, upon the ground of supporting it, to move up another to the Spanish frontier at Bayonne.

The quarrels at the court of Spain between Charles and his son, and some tumults at Madrid, soon afforded him an excuse for interfering as a friend to restore tranquillity, and for bringing this second army into Spain; and the weak-minded King had been persuaded to send the flower of the Spanish army under Romana * to the Baltic, nominally to prevent the Swedes and English from attacking the French communications in that direction. Madrid being thus peaceably occupied, more soldiers were poured in from France; the great frontier fortresses of St. Sebastian, Pampeluna,

* It afterwards escaped, reaching St. Ander in the north of Spain in October 1808.

Barcelona, and Figueras, were skilfully but treacherously surprised; Junot, who had received secret orders, disarmed by a stratagem that part of the Spanish army in Portugal; and Spain lay at the mercy of Napoleon, who now threw off all disguise, and placed his brother Joseph upon the Spanish throne.

In this way did the capital cities of both Spain and Portugal, and the principal strongholds of the whole Peninsula, fall without the slightest struggle into the hands of France.

The people of the conquered kingdoms, at first stupefied, soon turned furiously upon the French. Bloody insurrections broke out, and an appeal for assistance was made to England. She, at that time ever ready to resist Napoleon, and the policy of conquest and aggression which he represented, freely granted it; large supplies of arms and money were forwarded, and it was determined to send a British army into the Peninsula to assist the Portuguese and Spaniards to expel the French.

SELECTION OF POINT OF ATTACK

The events which we have narrated above were extended over several months, and it was not until July 1808 that the army set sail for the Peninsula. It was directed towards the mouth of the Tagus on the west coast of Portugal, and Cadiz.* The question now arises, Why was this direction given to the army? But to answer it demands

* Viscount Castlereagh to Sir A. Wellesley, July 15th, 1808—*Wellington Despatches* (Ed. 1837), vol. iv. pp. 27-30.

a knowledge, first, of the principles governing the movements of all organized armies; second, of the general military strength of the contending powers, and of the positions held in the Peninsula by the French; third, of the character of the country upon which the operations were about to be conducted.

Before going further, therefore, we shall devote a chapter to these essential matters, which should be studied by all those who read history from the point of view of military students.

CHAPTER II

PRINCIPLES GOVERNING THE MOVEMENTS OF ORGANIZED ARMIES

MILITARY STRENGTH, ETC., OF THE CONTENDING POWERS IN THIS WAR

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF MILITARY TOPOGRAPHY

TOPOGRAPHY OF THE PENINSULA

LARGE ARMIES NOW USED IN WAR—IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING THEM ASSEMBLED—NECESSITY OF DEPÔTS AND MAGAZINES, OF GOOD ROADS, OF GUARDING THOSE ROADS

THE fact that of two armies equally matched in every respect but that of numbers, the larger has clearly the advantage, naturally causes nations, when about to go to war, to raise as many soldiers as their resources will admit of; and in modern times powerful and wealthy nations have brought into the field enormous masses of men. But it is not sufficient to merely possess a large army; unless it can be *kept assembled*, be rapidly set in motion, and completely controlled, it is comparatively useless for warlike purposes.

If there are two contending forces, one of which can be moved upon an instant's notice, while the other cannot stir without much preparation, the former can evidently out-manœuvre the latter, and will pretty certainly defeat it.

Thus any cause which interferes with the mobility of an army is vitally detrimental to that army, and such a cause would be the absolute dependence for food upon the immediate country in which the troops might happen to be placed. It can be easily seen that the resources of any small district, in which, for purposes of war, a force of 50,000 or perhaps 100,000 men may be concentrated, must be often totally inadequate to supply, for any time, the required amount of sustenance. This will frequently be the case in a fertile and friendly district; in a barren or a hostile one, in which the crops have been destroyed or removed, it will certainly be so. An army placed in it without supplies of its own must either starve or disperse in search of food.

When dispersed its power of instant motion is gone. It must be collected together again before it can stir as a compact body; and if it has been dispersed in the neighbourhood of a well-organized enemy, its scattered portions are in danger of being beaten while isolated. For these reasons it is essential that the men of an army should not be left dependent for food upon the particular district or country wherein they are waging war. The nation which sends them out to fight her battles must forward it to them, though the commander of the army will, of course, economise his resources

by procuring food when practicable from his immediate neighbourhood.

These remarks, as to the necessity of sending forth food for men, apply with equal force to that of sending forage for horses and baggage animals. If they are not constantly fed the cavalry must cease to exist, and the guns and baggage could not be moved. An army must also be at all times ready to fight as well as move, and directly it runs short of ammunition it becomes half paralyzed as a fighting body. Moreover, a constant stream of recruits must be always on the road to join it, to supply the gaps in the ranks caused by battle and sickness; and hospitals in safe positions must be established to receive the sick. On account of considerations such as these, directly an army takes the field, one of the first proceedings is to form in convenient situations, near the theatre of operations,

Depôts and Magazines

in which, subsequently, recruits on the way to it, and men invalided or sent back from it, may find shelter; and stores of all kinds may be accumulated and preserved.

These must be safe from the attack of the enemy by natural position, if possible; but when that is impossible, must be fortified to ensure their security.

The place from which an army, having taken the field, draws its resources, and from which it advances to make war, is called the "*Base*" of that army—because it *forms the foundation upon which*

it stands. Sometimes, though not usually, an army may have more than one base.

As the army advances, supplies must be brought nearer to it, and therefore other magazines closer in rear are formed, and thus its supplies always follow it at a convenient distance. To keep up such a stream of supplies, however, would not be possible for any time without the existence of

Good Roads

between the army and its magazines. In bad weather, indifferent roads become impassable for the heavy artillery, and ammunition waggons, and ponderous trains which accompany an army. The army itself must also have good roads along which to march, otherwise no combined movement of the three arms could be made with any certainty, for artillery and even cavalry cannot move along the miry lanes, or across the fields which, perhaps, infantry might traverse.

We see, therefore, the importance of possessing a good road or line by which to communicate with the magazines—called in technical language the "*Line of communication with the base*"; and also a good road or line along which to move forward or operate, called the "*Line*—or, if there are two or more roads, lines—*of operation.*" Without these the arrival of supplies must be uncertain, and the army cannot march freely.

From what has been said as to the necessity of a constant stream of supplies, and of fresh men to fill up the losses caused by war, the importance of

guarding the roads by which these must arrive—*i.e.* the lines of communication—becomes apparent. Hence it is that, in war, a general who can place himself upon the road or roads by which an enemy's supplies are forwarded, and still more if he can remain there, has obtained a most important advantage, for unless his adversary can regain his line of supplies by beating him in battle, or has a second set of magazines in some other direction to fall back upon, he must soon become distressed for want of food, or (if pressed by him) short of ammunition. He also runs the risk of losing a quantity of valuable stores.

Therefore, in war, an army—both while marching and fighting—endeavours *to guard its communications with its magazines or base; and when it sees an opportunity, will try to threaten those of the enemy.*

Before closing this subject, it may be well to say that the above are principles of war laid down by all the great captains of modern times. Armies have occasionally marched to victory in spite of bad roads; and, when cut off from their supplies, have defeated the enemy in battle, and won campaigns: but this merely proves that pluck and energy—qualities of pre-eminent value in war—will often emerge triumphant out of the greatest difficulties. It does not excuse the placing an army, through ignorance, where the chances are against it.

"Every general," said Napoleon, "who loses his line of communication, is, according to the laws of war, worthy of death."—*Maximes de Guerre de Napoleon.*

MILITARY STRENGTH, ETC., OF THE CONTENDING POWERS

England had not at this period more than about 80,000 men disposable for a war in Europe; and of these, 30,000, collected from the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Gibraltar, were destined for the Peninsula. The rest of her forces were required for the defence of her colonies, or consisted of militia and volunteers organized for home defence.

Spain, weakened by the prompt action of Napoleon, had not more than 80,000 regular troops in the country, chiefly in Galicia, Andalusia, and certain garrison towns, and these were indifferently officered and organized. A Spanish force under Palafox was invested in Saragossa; another, under Cuesta, on July 14th, 1808, was defeated by the French at Medina de Rio Seco; but the people soon rose in numbers, and were enrolled into partially armed and drilled bodies.

Portugal, her troops largely dispersed or disbanded, had few regular troops available; but the spirit of the nation was good. Patriotic "Juntas"* organized resistance; the French were overpowered in some places; and it may here be said that Portuguese levies, trained and led by British officers, became later on very effective troops.

France might have been termed a nation of soldiers. For many years she had been incessantly at war, and her armies were not only composed, in large part, of experienced and well-tried troops, but they were strong in the confidence produced by almost constant victory, and in the leadership

* Local governing bodies.

of renowned generals. Napoleon had at his disposal about 600,000 men, and of these he had before long despatched some 80,000 into Spain. The greater number had entered by Bayonne, occupied Vittoria and Burgos upon the high road to Madrid, all the fortresses upon the French frontier, and Madrid itself. Forces were despatched under Moncey towards Valencia and Carthagena. Duhesme was in Catalonia; and a part of Dupont's corps was ordered through Cordova, in the direction of Cadiz—a point to be noticed, as its subsequent fate materially influenced the disposition of the British forces.* The invaders, though successfully resisted in some of the cities (such as Saragossa and Valencia), had in general routed and subdued the insurgents; and Napoleon, considering all dangerous resistance quelled, had left for Paris. Junot, in Portugal, whose army was some 25,000 strong, had been hard pressed to put down the popular insurrection, and, after some bloody successes, had yielded up parts of the country, but still retained possession, in force, of Lisbon, and of the fortresses of Elvas, Almeida, and Peniché.

Such was roughly the situation affairs had assumed as the British troops neared the coast of the Peninsula, but it was to be changed materially in Spain even before they landed (see page 67).

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF MILITARY TOPOGRAPHY

The natural features of the earth necessarily ex-

* See page 49 as to the Spanish victory of Baylen, east of Cordova, where Dupont was defeated by Castaños, and capitulated, July 19th, 1808, with 20,000 men.

ercise a most important influence upon the operations of armies. The existence and direction of mountain ranges and rivers, or of impassable or even difficult ground, must frequently control the movements that can be made by troops; they give, in fact, in a military sense, strength or weakness to a country. Artificial features enhance or lessen the importance of the natural ones, and therefore, while speaking of these latter, we must consider also the constructions—such as roads, bridges, and fortresses—which have been built either to overcome or to strengthen them. Before entering upon the study of any campaign, the country in which it was fought should be made the subject of careful consideration. The roads being good or bad, the rivers fordable or unfordable, navigable or the reverse, the position of fortifications and so on, are points of the greatest moment in war, and these details, as well as many others of importance, must be studied. Information upon military particulars of this description concerning a country is comprised in its military geography, or what is perhaps a more correct term, its military "topography." *

TOPOGRAPHY OF THE PENINSULA

Map I. (facing the Title-page) shows that the Peninsula is intersected by numerous mountain ranges, and many rivers. It is described by Lavallée, the great military geographer, as being "a chaos of mountains and deep defiles, where 300 men might stop an army—of bare plains—of

* Geography means strictly speaking a description of the mere, natural earth; Topography, a description of places on it as well.

ravines, impenetrable in winter on account of their waters, and in summer on account of their steepness—of rivers, having dangerous fords and not many bridges—of isolated towns, surrounded by walls—and of few roads."

The country rises up at all points from the coast towards the centre, and the central portion consists of a comparatively flat plateau, many feet above the level of the sea. It is often of importance to understand the relative elevations of a country's surface, and to be able to do this, one of the first things to notice is the course of the great rivers. Water must flow downwards; if, therefore, we trace these rivers and some of the streams flowing into them to their various sources, and join the highest sources with an imaginary line, it is evident that the ground over which this line would pass must be comparatively elevated. Such a line is called the "*line of water-parting*," or "water-shed," of a country. We can trace it in the Peninsula, from Cape Tarifa in the south, running eastwards along the Alpujarras to the Sierra Alcaraz, and then turning to the north, and following upwards the crest-line of the Iberian Mountains, which are composed of the Sierras Alcaraz, Cuença, Urbion, and Reynosa, until it meets in the extreme north the great chain of the Pyrenees. This latter chain completely traverses the Peninsula in its northern part from west to east—*i.e.* from Cape Finisterre to Cape Creux—and its slopes form a high wall from which the country descends abruptly towards the north, in the direction of the sea or of France. In the south of Spain the Alpujarras form a

similar wall, elevated high above the Mediterranean, and from which the country slopes steeply towards the south—the sea-coast. The Iberian Mountains connecting the Pyrenees in the north with the Alpujarras in the south, descend with some steepness towards the east—*i.e.* towards the River Ebro and the Mediterranean; but on the west incline very gradually towards the Atlantic. It is because this western slope comprises the central portion of the Peninsula, and is at first so very gradual, that the middle of the country has the plateau-like character above alluded to.

The whole country may, in fact, be compared in shape to a gigantic pyramid, of which the top had been cut off, and of which the summit (or central table-land) rises on an average to from 2,000 to 3,000 feet above the sea. It has also been likened to an inverted soup-plate, the rim of which varies in width.

Climate, Resources, etc.

It results from this peculiar formation that we find in the Peninsula great varieties of climate, and that an army operating in that country is exposed to extremes of heat and cold. There are also great differences in the products of the soil. The elevated central portion, especially around Madrid, consists of barren and wind-swept plains, without water, and crowned by jagged ridges or sierras.

The provinces between this portion and the surrounding coast have a more productive soil. In the Castiles, and the south of Leon, wheat and barley grow freely, and in Estremadura there are

extensive tracts of pasture-land, where large flocks of sheep are reared.

The southern and eastern provinces of Spain (such as Andalusia and Valencia), which border upon the sea, are the rich districts of the Peninsula. Here the soil, heated by an almost tropical sun and fanned by breezes from the ocean, produces in abundance almost every kind of fruit and grain, and, where irrigated, forms excellent pasture-land.

In Portugal, corn is grown on the table-lands, especially in the Alemtejo and the northern provinces; but though the soil of this kingdom is in parts fertile, there is comparatively but little cultivation.

In fact, the Peninsula is by nature a fairly fertile country, but its inhabitants were indolent and averse to labour, and many of its provinces were, at the time of which we write, but thinly populated. It was a country, therefore, in which the certainty of obtaining provisions readily at any point, could not be counted upon, and it has been said, with reference to this, and to the difficult nature of the ground, that "a small army must be defeated there, and a large one starve."

Regarding the description of carriage which could be procured in it, animals and waggons suitable for heavy transport were most difficult to obtain in any quarter. Mules and bullocks were used almost entirely for drawing the carts of the country, and horses were indifferent and scarce.

Mountains

Traversing the slope which descends westward from the crest-line of the Iberian Mountains, and

includes the central plateau, are three great mountain chains. These are named differently at various points of their course, but it is sufficient to term them here (beginning from the most southern), the Sierra Morena, the Mountains of Toledo, and the Sierra Guadarama.

Together with the Pyrenees in the north, and the Alpujarras in the south, they divide this western slope into four distinct basins, down which four of the principal rivers of the Peninsula flow towards the sea; these basins are those of the Guadalquiver, the Guadiana, the Tagus, and the Douro.

The general course and nature of these mountain chains should be especially noticed, for they form very formidable obstacles, separating these river basins one from the other. The thumb and fingers of a hand spread out flat upon a table would represent the mountain chains, and the spaces between them the river basins.

The Alpujarras.—A short and very high chain. Its summits are covered with perpetual snow, and to the north it throws out many spurs, through which the Guadalquiver forces its way.

The Sierra Morena, springing directly from the Iberian Mountains, and terminating at the mouth of the Guadiana. Its northern slopes, at the commencement, mingle with the central plateau; but the southern are rugged and precipitous.

The Mountains of Toledo.—This chain blends at first almost imperceptibly with the central plateau, so that the basins of the Tagus and Guadiana, are

only separated at their heads by a few slight eminences; and thus communication from one basin to the other, near the sources of these rivers, is easy. As the range approaches the Portuguese frontier it takes the name of the Sierra San Mahmed, and runs close to the River Guadiana. Thence it turns towards the south, under the names of the Sierra Estremoz and Sierra Monchique, throwing off branches to the east which impede the course of the Guadiana, and finally terminates at Cape St. Vincent.

The Sierra Guadarama.—This chain springs from the Iberian Mountains, under the name of the Somo Sierra, and extends in a sinuous line towards the west. Between Madrid and Ciudad-Rodrigo it throws off branches to the north, which form formidable obstacles, only passable at certain points, and is remarkable at the Sierras of Gredos and Gata for the width and steepness of its slopes to the south. After crossing the Portuguese frontier it divides into three main branches. Of these, the principal is the Sierra Estrella, spurs from which come down to and impede the River Tagus, jutting out also towards the Coa and Agueda. This range extends (under the names of the Sierra Baragueda and Sierra Cintra) to beyond Lisbon.

The Pyrenees.—This great mountain range (termed in the north-west corner of the Peninsula the "*Maritime*" Pyrenees) is in parts, and especially in the north-west, very wild and difficult in character. Notice should be taken of the series of mountain ridges enclosing the basins of the Minho and the Sil, and of the long spurs which

cross the Portuguese frontier between the Rivers Sabor, Tua, and Tamega.

We have now considered the course and character of the mountain ranges and slopes which branch off to the *westward* of the crest-line of the Iberian Mountains. Let us now turn our attention to those on the *eastward* of this crest-line. The eastern slope of the Iberian Mountains themselves, together with that portion of the Pyrenees termed the Continental Pyrenees, separating Spain from France, enclose the basin of the Ebro, a large and important river which forms, as it were, a wet ditch in front of the Spanish defensive line of the Iberian chain. Many ridges and spurs intersect this basin, and impede the course of the river, rendering its navigation impossible. The principal mass of the chain of the Pyrenees is steep and rocky, and covered with snow and ice. That portion of it along the French frontier is highest about the centre of its length, and lowest towards the two extremities, south of Bayonne and Perpignan.

The frontier line between France and Spain, commencing at the mouth of the Bidassoa (near Bayonne), runs in its general direction along this great mountain barrier, until it strikes the Mediterranean at Cape Creux.

Roads

Roads in mountain districts are, as a rule, conducted for convenience over the lowest depressions of the chains, the spots where they cross being denominated "passes." These passes were comparatively few in number, and many of them,

though good in fine weather, became impracticable during the rainy season.

From France into Spain, across the Pyrenees, there were but two high roads; one from Bayonne, through Irun and Vittoria, to Burgos, and from thence to Madrid by Aranda and the *Somo Sierra Pass*, or by Valladolid and the *Escurial Pass*.

One from Perpignan, by Belgarde, to Tarragona; here the road divided into two branches—one leading to the south of Spain through Valencia, the other to Madrid by Lerida and Saragossa.

There were other roads and paths traversing the Continental Pyrenees, such as that from Bayonne, by Maya and Roncesvalles to Pampeluna, but many were impracticable for wheeled transport, and some were mere footpaths.

From Portugal into Spain there were but few roads, and Lisbon and Madrid were connected by but two good lines of communication:

(1) The road south of the Tagus, by Elvas, Badajoz, and Almaraz, crossing the river at Almaraz. (2) The road north of the Tagus, by Alhandra, Alcoentre, Leirya, Coimbra, Viseu, Almeida, and Ciudad-Rodrigo.

It can be seen that the ridge of the Sierra Estrella interposed between these two highways. Across it there existed only indifferent roads, one being from Abrantes, by Thomar, Espinhal, Murcella, and Celorico, to Almeida.

A tolerably good one led from Lisbon, close to the Tagus, through Santarem, Abrantes, Alcantara, and Coria, and thence over the Sierra Gata to Ciudad-Rodrigo.

Rivers

The great rivers of the Peninsula, winding between mountain spurs, were only navigable for a comparatively short distance from their mouths; so that the transport of stores by them for many miles into the interior was impossible. Speaking generally, they were obstacles to, more often than a means of, communication, and it should be remarked that the navigable portions of the two most important ones—viz. the Tagus and the Douro—lie in Portugal.

Good roads traverse them at comparatively few points; rocky ledges occur often throughout their course, and they are, as a rule, dry in summer and rapid and swollen in winter.

Bridges and fords are found at intervals, but the former, with some exceptions, are of a nature easily destroyed, and the latter are frequently available only at certain seasons.

Some of these rivers require special notice.

1. *The Guadalquiver.*—Flowing past Seville, an important city, where there was a cannon foundry; navigable as far as that point.

2. *The Guadiana.*—This river rises among the marshes of the central plateau, and passing by Merida and Badajoz, flows through Portugal, forming its boundary along portions of its course. In Portugal *no bridge existed across it.*

3. *The Tagus.*—This river, in its upper portion, has a rocky bed and high banks, and, though fordable at points in summer, it was very difficult of passage for guns and transport. At Arzobispo,

Almaraz, Alcantara, and Abrantes there were bridges. As it enters the frontier of Portugal it is tortuous and full of rapids. This is its character as far as Abrantes, where it widens out and becomes navigable. From this point to Lisbon it varies from 300 yards to five miles in breadth, narrowing before it enters the sea.

4. *The Mondego* flows at first among almost inaccessible mountains; and, emerging into the plains at Coimbra, enters the sea at Figueras.

5. *The Douro* takes its rise in the Iberian Mountains, and passes Aranda and Tordesillas. As it nears the frontier of Portugal it encounters a ridge springing from the Maritime Pyrenees and turns southwards, forming for some distance the boundary between Spain and Portugal. It then crosses the latter country and enters the sea near Oporto. Above this place it is more than 300 yards wide, and in winter is difficult of passage. It is navigable from the Portuguese frontier to the sea.

6. *The Minho.*—This river traverses a very mountainous and broken country, and is joined near Orense by the Sil, which also forces its way through many mountain spurs. After this junction it issues from the mountains, and from this point to the sea forms the boundary between Spain and Portugal.

7. *The Ebro*—an important river—rises near the junction of the Iberian Mountains with the Pyrenees, and flows south-eastward through a confined and mountainous country. It passes by Tudela and Saragossa. Below the latter place

obstacles impede its course at every moment, until it empties itself into the sea near Tortosa.

We have given above only the principal rivers of the Peninsula, but as each courses to the ocean many minor streams flow into it. Descending from the enclosing mountains on the right hand and on the left, they mingle with the main rivers and are called their "affluents." To enumerate these is unnecessary, but many shown on the map will become familiar in connection with the operations we are about to describe.

Harbours

These are numerous, and are many of them good. Beginning at the northern coast, near the French frontier, and going round by the western and southern coasts, we may draw attention to the following.

St. Sebastian, St. Ander, Ferrol, Corunna—good ports and more or less fortified.

Vigo, a small but safe harbour.

Oporto, at the mouth of the Douro, rather a dangerous port, by reason of its sandbanks and islands.

Figueras, at the mouth of the Mondego, a small harbour.

Lisbon, on the Tagus, a very fine port; it was strongly fortified. The city of Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, contained an arsenal and the chief military and naval establishments of the kingdom.

Cadiz, near the mouth of the Guadalquiver, a large port with fortified roadstead, situated upon

the island of Leon, and separated from the mainland by a channel.

Gibraltar, belonging to England, important as an almost impregnable fortress, and from its situation between the Atlantic and Mediterranean seas. The harbour is not a specially good one.

Carthagena, Alicante, Tarragona, Barcelona, all good ports and more or less fortified.

Fortresses

Fortresses are usually erected by a nation to defend what are considered particularly important points of its territory. We have seen that there were only two great roads leading from France into Spain—viz. those through Bayonne and Perpignan. We therefore find Spanish fortresses placed to guard these roads, or the passes and country near them, — such as, near the western road, St. Sebastian and Pampeluna; on the eastern, Figueras, Gerona, and Barcelona.

Burgos, on the Bayonne-Madrid road, at the junction of two roads leading towards Madrid, was defended by a strong castle.

Upon the frontier dividing Spain from Portugal, the two great roads—viz. those through Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz—were guarded by important fortresses. The Portuguese fortress of Almeida was faced by the Spanish one of Ciudad-Rodrigo, and the Portuguese fortress of Elvas by the Spanish one of Badajoz.*

* Of the fortresses named above, Ciudad-Rodrigo, Badajoz, and Gerona were, when the British troops sailed for the Peninsula, in Spanish hands; the remainder in French hands.

COMMENTS

From what has been said regarding the strength and position of the armies, and the military topography of the Peninsula, we can understand the motives for certain measures, which would not otherwise be clear to us.

1. The reason for directing the British army towards the mouth of the Tagus and Cadiz can now be seen.

It might seem, at first sight, that it would have been more advantageous to have directed it towards the western or eastern extremity of the Pyrenees, in order that, by at once operating against the roads through Bayonne or Perpignan, it might intercept the French line of supplies, and interpose between the enemy and France; but the superior *numbers* of the French would alone have rendered this course impracticable. Great Britain could most efficiently aid her allies by attacking the French at their greatest distance from France, and therefore from succour and support.

On this ground alone an advance against Junot in Portugal, who was holding Lisbon, and against those French corps the furthest detatched from their own country, such as Dupont's, moving towards Cadiz (see page 29), was judicious.

Lisbon and Cadiz were each points of consequence to secure, being both good harbours, and also places of importance. It was of the first moment to wrest Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, and containing large military and naval establishments, from the French hands. It was also of

consequence that the French should not be permitted to seize Cadiz, and so gain a hold over one of the richest provinces of Spain—viz. Andalusia.

Lisbon acquired, it would next be a great advantage to secure a firm footing in Portugal as a base for future operations. The mountain spurs, which north of Lisbon stretch from the Tagus to the sea; and the eastern frontier towards Spain, which, though extended, was difficult to pass except at certain points, and was guarded, where the two main roads crossed it, by fortresses, favoured defence. Taking the eastern frontier, beginning at the south and following the frontier line, we have first the River Guadiana, without any bridges over it, backed by the Sierras of Monchique and Estremoz, and covered by the fortress of Elvas. North of this the spurs of the Sierra San Mahmed and Sierra Estrella, meeting on the banks of the Tagus, scarcely allow a passage for that river, and make of it a tortuous and broken stream. Then the Sierra Estrella, and the spurs it throws out towards the Rivers Coa and Agueda, not far from the fortress of Almeida; then the Douro; then the mountain range to the north, with the spurs between the Sabor, Tua, and the Tamega; and, last of all, the River Minho.

In Portugal, if once adequately occupied, and the French expelled from it, the British and Portuguese would have a strong position from which to attack the enemy in Spain, and one from which it would be most difficult to dislodge them. Though the resources of the country were small, England had that inestimable advantage which

dominant sea-power confers. She held the command of the sea, from which she could obtain supplies, and she could secure the entrance to the navigable portions both of the Tagus and the Douro, two of the most important of the Peninsular rivers.

In a movement into Spain from a westerly direction—*i.e.* from the direction of Portugal—up one of these river basins, especially if the navigation of the rivers were improved and extended, water carriage would facilitate the operations, and particularly the conveyance of supplies.

2. We see also certain advantages possessed by Napoleon.

He had established himself in the centre of Spain, and could move at pleasure from the elevated central plateau surrounding Madrid down the basins of the Douro, the Tagus, or the Guadiana, in support of the army under Junot, which had been already *pushed past* the strong fortress-guarded frontier of Portugal. His numbers also gave him the power of operating along two or three of the river basins at once, thus threatening many points, as well as holding under subjection different portions of the Peninsula.

3. Some disadvantages of his position are also made clear.

The French armies, though they could enter these river basins easily from the central plateau, would, as they descended them, become separated by difficult mountain chains, with few passes over them, so that they could not move rapidly to the assistance of each other, nor keep up a good com-

munication. It is easy to see that the existence of these parallel ribs of mountains—which have been compared to the jagged-shaped waves of a great petrified sea—influenced materially the position of the French. Napoleon, *having secured the passes over them*, could use them as barriers against an enemy coming from the north or south; but, if it became necessary for him to face an enemy that could break out at pleasure from any point in the *west* (for instance, against one holding Portugal), they might act detrimentally to his own army, dividing his front, which might have to be extended in these different basins to watch that enemy.

The French line of communication by Bayonne was a long one, and passed over ranges of mountains. *It required many men to guard it against the hostile Spanish population.* Strong detachments had to be employed in watching it and in escorting supplies, and this weakened the French army. Napoleon—partly for this reason, no doubt—made use chiefly of the one high road through Bayonne for the transport of his troops and *matériel* throughout the war. It led more directly than that by Perpignan to the centre of Spain, and to have protected two long lines of communication would have been very difficult under the circumstances in which he was placed.

In short, the French generals, in spite of the number of their soldiery, were about to contend against many disadvantages, not the least among these being the rugged nature of the country, adapted to defence by a hostile population; and the readiness with which the bulk of

the peasantry would naturally give information to their enemies.

With regard to the prospects under which the British were entering upon the war, England had, upon her side, as relative advantages, all the points which have been above alluded to as bearing disadvantageously upon the French. Her army was going to fight in a friendly country, whose government and inhabitants would, it was expected (an expectation, however, scarcely realised), aid it with ability as well as zeal. She had money —the sinews of war—and she had also the command of the sea; a point, as we have already said, of a very special value. This afforded her a facility in forwarding supplies, and gave her power to distract the attention of the French by threatening descents upon various parts of the coast.

The principal disadvantage which she laboured under was the numerical weakness of her army compared with that of the French.

CHAPTER III

CAMPAIGN IN PORTUGAL, 1808
ROLEIA; VIMIERA; CONVENTION OF CINTRA

Of the troops composing the British army, one portion, under Sir Arthur Wellesley (over 9,000*), sailed from Cork; another, under Sir John Moore (about 10,000), from Sweden, where it had been sent upon an expedition to aid the Swedes against Russia, which had terminated; and a third, under General Spencer (about 5,000), from Gibraltar.

Sir Arthur Wellesley had the chief command at the outset, but two senior officers to him (Sir Harry Burrard and Sir Hew Dalrymple) were ordered, at about the same time, to join the army. The troops under Wellesley and Moore were directed towards the coast of Portugal to assemble off the Tagus, and those under Spencer towards Cadiz. Lord Castlereagh writes to Sir Arthur Wellesley from Downing Street, June 30th, 1808: "The first efforts of the British troops are to be directed to the expulsion of the enemy from Portugal, that the insurrection against the French may thereby become general throughout that kingdom and Spain."

Again, on July 15th: "The motives of sending so large a force to assemble off the Tagus are: (1)

* Embarkation Return says 10,284; but apparently about 9,000 only landed in Portugal. See Fortescue's *History of the British Army*, vol. vi. pp. 191 and 203.

July to Aug. 1808

To provide effectually an attack upon the Tagus.* (2) To have such an additional force disposable as may admit of a detachment being made to the south, either with a view to secure Cadiz, if it should be threatened by General Dupont's force, or to co-operate with the Spanish troops in reducing that corps (Dupont's), if circumstances should favour such an operation, or any other that may be concerted."

Wellesley was to decide on what part of the coast, close to Lisbon, he was to land, and endeavour if possible, not only to expel Junot "from Lisbon, but to cut off his retreat towards Spain."

In a memorandum, also, of August 10th, 1808, Lord Castlereagh writes: "Sir Hew Dalrymple [who was, as senior, to supersede Wellesley] has no precise instructions, beyond the occupation of Lisbon, the security of Cadiz, and the reduction of Dupont. It was considered that ulterior measures could not well be decided on till these objects, if not actually accomplished, were in train of being so."

And he writes to Sir Hew, on August 20th, 1808: "Portugal being recovered, our objects seem to be two: (1) To aid the Spaniards in expelling the enemy. (2) In the mode of doing so, to aim, if possible, at the destruction, or capture, of a whole or a part of the French army." †

With regard to this second object, the British force which could be made available, from all

* Meaning, no doubt, upon the French in that quarter.

† See *Wellington Despatches* (Ed. 1837), vol. iv. pp. 16, 27–30; and *Letters and Despatches of Lord Castlereagh*, by the Marquess of Londonderry (1851), vol. vi.

sources, for operations in the Peninsula if necessary, the Government placed at 50,000 men; which, in the light of subsequent events, clearly shows how over-sanguine was the expectation at this time of what the Spanish levies themselves might be able to accomplish. July to Aug. 1808

This was largely due to certain Spanish successes, touched upon on page 67, which, between July and October 1808, gave rise to very false views as to the power of the Spanish forces in the field.

Chief among these was the important Spanish victory of Baylen gained (July 19th, 1808) in Andalusia by General Castaños over the French force under Dupont moving (see page 29) upon Cadiz. By it Cadiz and Andalusia were saved from immediate danger, and with the result that, the "reduction of Dupont" having been thus accomplished, Spencer's force was not required in that quarter, and was left free to reinforce Wellesley's in Portugal.

Wellesley, preceding the fleet in a fast frigate, touched at Corunna and Oporto to gain information, and by July 30th, 1808, was off the mouth of the River Mondego, where at Figueras he determined to land his troops, Spencer being now directed to join him from Cadiz. To have attempted a descent near Lisbon at the mouth of the Tagus would have been hazardous, owing to the surf, the forts, and the strength of the French; and Peniché to the north of it was commanded by French guns.

He writes * to Lord Castlereagh from H.M.S. *Donegal*, off the Mondego River, on August 1st: "I shall consider the possession of the harbour

* *Wellington Despatches* (Ed. 1837), vol. iv. p. 43.

Aug. 1–15, 1808

and city of Lisbon as the immediate object of our operations, which must be attained by that of the forts by which the entrance of the Tagus is guarded, and it is probable that the enemy will not allow us to undertake those operations till he shall have been driven from the field."

Between August 1st and 5th, with some difficulty, but without opposition, he disembarked his troops; and, on the 9th, Spencer, who had anticipated his orders, having arrived, and having organized his army for the advance, he moved, with 15,000 men (including some Portuguese) and 18 guns, towards Leirya.

His plan was to keep in touch with the fleet, near the coast, in order to facilitate supply and cover the landing of reinforcements, and to hold his troops together ready to strike a blow at Junot's army, as near Lisbon as might be possible. Also that Moore, on arrival, should land at the Mondego, march on Santarem, and block the Tagus there, from whence he could, from the east of the Sierra Baragueda, threaten Lisbon, and Junot's communication with, and retreat through, Elvas, south of the Tagus.

Junot, from his position about Lisbon, Elvas, etc. (see page 29), in order to oppose his advance, directed (August 6th) Laborde's division (5,000) from Lisbon towards Leirya, and Loison's (8,000) from near Elvas, to unite with Laborde through Abrantes, while he himself (August 15th), leaving 7,000 to hold Lisbon, marched with 2,500 on Villafranca.

But Wellesley prevented the junction of Laborde and Loison (August 11th) at Leirya by occupying

that place himself, when Laborde, then at Alcobaça, fell back to Roleia, and Loison, turning southward, near Thomar, made for Santarem, and afterwards Alcoentre. Aug. 15-17, 1808

COMBAT OF OBIDOS

August 15*th*, 1808

The army came into collision with the enemy's advanced posts at Obidos, where, on the evening of August 15th, some men fell in a skirmish with Laborde's (or Delaborde's) French division. Obidos is thus noteworthy as the place where British blood was first shed in the Peninsula.

Laborde's main body made a stand at Roleia (see Map II., facing page 64), where a range of heights offered a good position, his object being to check the Allied advance towards Lisbon, and give the French forces behind him time to concentrate.

BATTLE OF ROLEIA*

August 17*th*, 1808

(See plan facing page 52)

On the 17th Sir Arthur Wellesley moved forward to drive the French from this position. The Allied strength was about 14,000, with 18 guns; that of the French about 5,000, with 5 guns. Being thus greatly superior in numbers, he advanced in three columns, directing one against the centre, and meaning, with the two others, to turn the French flanks along the mountain spurs.

* The Spanish towns and villages from which the Peninsular battles take their names are variously spelt in various histories. The spelling followed in these pages is that of the official Army List.

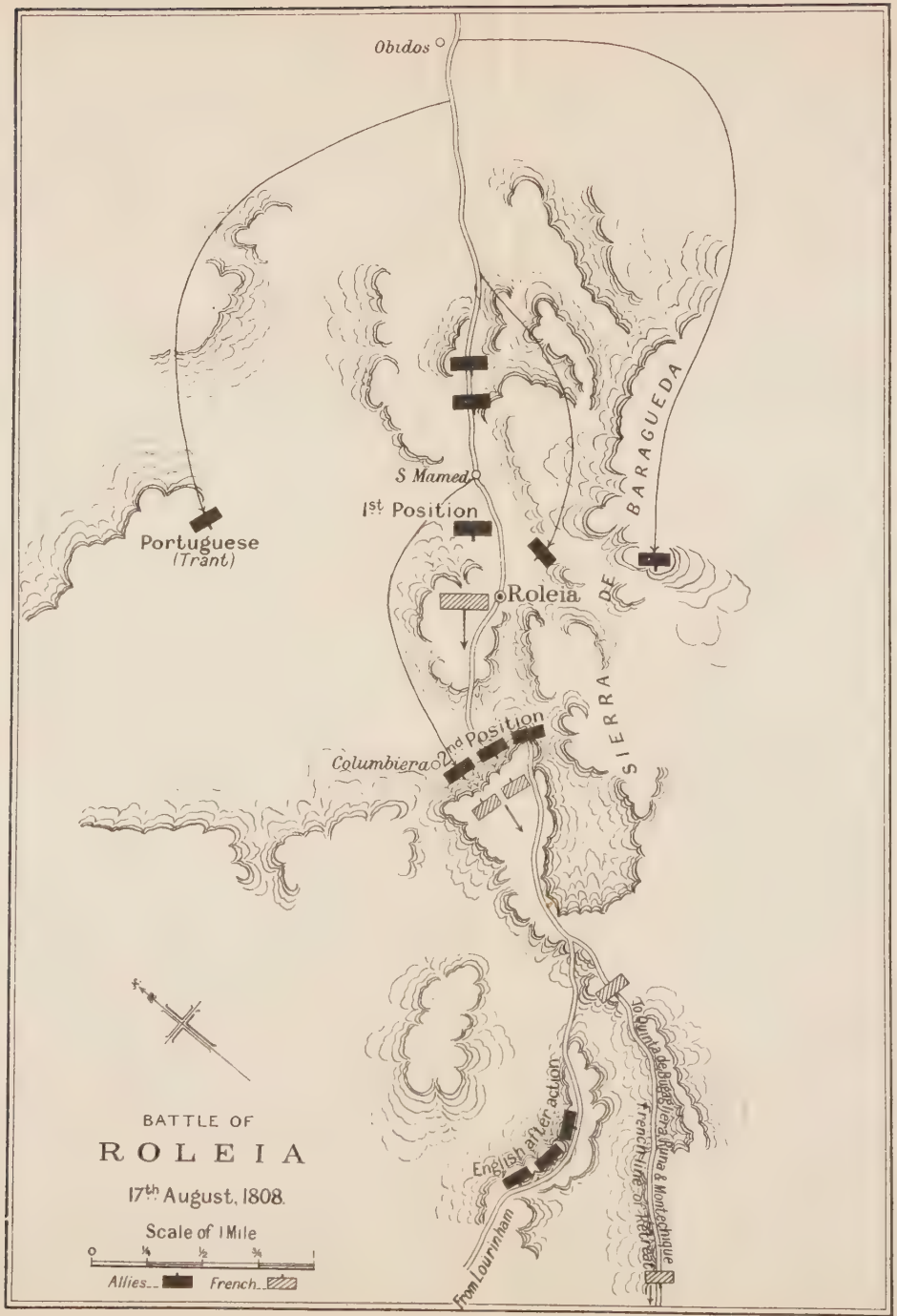
Aug. 17, 1808 With the main, or central, column were the 1st Brigade, Hill; the 5th, Catlin-Crawfurd; the 3rd, Nightingale; the 6th, Fane; and a body of Portuguese. With the left column, the 2nd Brigade, Ferguson; and the 4th, Bowes. A few cavalry and guns accompanied each of these columns. The right column, under Trant, consisted of the bulk of the Portuguese infantry and some cavalry.

After a cannonade and slight resistance, Laborde, seeing himself outflanked, fell back to a yet stronger position not far behind, on heights overlooking the village of Columbiera.

Sir Arthur's advance against the second position was made on the same principle as that against the first; but, owing to an imperfect execution of his instructions, the left attacked too directly (*i.e.* before it had passed the French right flank), and the centre prematurely. Thus the French right was not fully turned, and the Allied superiority of force not made the utmost of, while the advantage of the ground was with the French.

As a consequence of this divergence from instructions, the Allied loss was heavier than it need have been; but their advance was so determined and steady, that in the end it carried all before it; and finally Laborde—wounded, and his army in danger of being cut off—retired through Quinta de Bugagliera to Montechique. Thus the French had not succeeded in checking the Allied advance on Lisbon to any important extent.

Loison and Junot were unable to give any aid to Laborde at Roleia. Loison, as has been mentioned. had endeavoured to unite with Laborde at



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Leirya, a point which was too near the enemy, and, being forestalled by Wellesley, had fallen back. Thus on the 17th he had only reached Cercal, near Alcoentre, while Junot's troops (though he himself had ridden on to Loison) were near Villafranca. Aug. 17, 1808

This battle has the interest of being the first serious one in the Peninsula in which the French soldiers, accustomed to constant victory under Napoleon, met the Allies under Wellington; and in it they failed to drive back the determined advance of the British infantry. The loss * of the Allies was about 500; that of the French 600 and 3 guns.

"Roleia," as a bar to the Peninsular medal, and battle-honour on the colours and appointments of regiments entitled to it, commemorates this battle.

It is worth mentioning that the Duke of Wellington (Sir Arthur Wellesley at this period) has been sometimes held to have been too exacting as a leader in insisting upon a most literal and rigid obedience to his orders. Possibly this first serious encounter with the enemy in Portugal impressed the necessity of this upon him, in the interests of the army. Napier, though stating that, in war, mistakes are the rule, not the exception, speaks of there having been a "fierce neglect of orders" in certain instances on this occasion.

The lesson is, that subordinates must add self-restraint to daring, and conform to the general plan and instructions of their superiors. This, and the

* When not otherwise stated this always means throughout these pages the loss in killed, wounded, and missing, given in round numbers merely. Different accounts vary materially at times in these details.

Aug. 17–21, 1808

combination by Sir Arthur Wellesley of flank with direct attacks, are points to be specially noted.

By August 19th the forces of Loison and Junot (having moved through Quinta de Bugagliera), and of Laborde from Montechique, had concentrated at Torres Vedras; while Wellesley, who had heard that the brigades of Anstruther and Ackland were off the coast on the 17th, had halted at Vimiera to cover their disembarcation. These (about 4,000) having with some difficulty, on account of the surf and opposition of the French horse, been landed by the 20th at Maceira Bay, near Vimiera, he meant, on the 22nd, to move forward.

The only good road to Lisbon led through the pass of Torres Vedras, but there was an indifferent one, apparently not watched, turning this pass near the coast, and Sir Arthur hoped by it to reach Mafra and interpose between Junot and the capital.

But his intentions were interfered with by the arrival on the night of the 20th of Sir Harry Burrard, who, without landing, ordered the army to stand fast, until Moore, now off the Mondego, had been brought down to join it.

This was the position when Junot, advancing, attacked Wellesley early on the 21st without reconnoitring the ground, and brought on the

BATTLE OF VIMIERA
August 21st, 1808

(See plan facing page 60)

In this battle the Allies numbered about 20,000,* including a very small body of cavalry with 18 guns.

* The strength of Allies and French is here taken from Fortescue.

Of these some 18,000 were British, consisting of the brigades of Hill, Anstruther, Fane, Ackland, Bowes, Nightingale, Ferguson, and Catlin-Crawfurd. The Portuguese, under Trant, were about 2,000 strong.* The French (divisions of Laborde, Loison, and Margaron) numbered about 13,000, including nearly 2,000 cavalry, and were stronger in both cavalry and artillery, having 23 guns. In Laborde's division were the brigades of Brennier and Thomières; in Loison's, those of Solignac and Charlot; Margaron had a division of cavalry; Kellermann commanded a reserve brigade of Grenadiers, of which Maransin formed a part; Foy was with the reserve artillery. Aug. 21, 1808

The Allies held a good position. Hill and the bulk of the army occupied a height north-west of Vimiera, the left resting upon another to the north-east, overlooking an almost impassable ravine; while in the centre lay the village of Vimiera, masked from the French view by a hill † in front, on which some infantry and guns were posted (under Anstruther and Fane), the cavalry being near Vimiera. Before part of the position the stream of the Maceira flowed towards the sea.

We have said that Junot attacked without reconnoitring, for which he has been blamed. Nothing but a very strong necessity can justify a leader in not making every effort to ascertain the nature of a position, and how it is occupied and can be best approached, before he assails it.

Junot, being superior to the Allies in cavalry, could certainly have found out more than he did

* The brigades were not as yet organized into divisions.

† Described usually as "rugged and isolated"; but by Fortescue, who has visited the ground, as neither isolated nor rugged, but broad and round.

Aug. 21, 1808

as to their strength and position; but his attack was meant to be a surprise, the success of which the appearance of any reconnoitring troops might have endangered. He also greatly underestimated the character of the British troops and the skill of their leader, whom he had never met in battle.

As a fact the attack was entirely unexpected up to midnight on the 20th, and Napier writes * "that had Junot arrived, as planned, by daybreak on the 21st, he could have gained an important ridge occupied in the battle [see below] by the Allied left, before Sir Arthur had done so."

Junot had marched all night, designing to attack at dawn, but the difficult ground and other accidents delayed him very greatly, and it was after 8 o'clock (*i.e.* hours after daybreak at this time of the year—August) when he came face to face with the Allied position, the dust of his march having been perceptible to the Allies for a little time previous to this, which it would not have been before daybreak.

The high ground, behind which the Allied left lay, appeared to him to be denuded of troops, and, imagining that the main body of his enemy rested behind the central hill, his efforts in the battle which ensued were directed against the Allied centre and left.

Laborde, with Thomières', Charlot's, and a portion of Kellermann's brigades, and Margaron in reserve, attacked the centre near Vimiera (Maransin moving on the right, and Foy's guns towards the left), while the brigades of Solignac

* Napier's *English Battles in the Peninsula*, 1852, p. 7.

and Brennier were detached to assail and turn the left, so as to drive the Allies westward. Aug. 21, 1808

But, Napier writes, "To act on conjectures is dangerous in war; Junot's were all false. . . . Soon that general discovered the mischief of over-haste." The rocky and broken ground which his troops had to cross involved him in immediate difficulties, and he had to attack under every disadvantage.

Did the fame of Sir Arthur Wellesley (Wellington) as a leader, instead of being based, as it is, upon many other great qualifications, rest solely on these facts—that he realized, when few others did so, the great importance (for surprise and to avoid loss) of concealing his troops behind hills, in woods, and in folds of the ground till he required them to act; and further of opposing the French columns covered by their skirmishers with a still stronger body of skirmishers, with artillery fire, and also with the superior musketry fire of the deployed line two deep—he would still stand out as one of the greatest generals of any nation on the battle-field.

These principles, now accepted as axioms, he put in practice from Vimiera to Waterloo, and it is perhaps not too much to say that, as a result, the fate of Europe was changed. On account of this we allude to them here more particularly.

Behind those heights on the left, which to Junot appeared unoccupied, lay British troops, ready to advance to the sky-line and pour in their fire. Sir Arthur, whose grasp of a battle-field and handling of troops were very quick, reinforced his centre and left also with four brigades from under cover of the

Aug. 21, 1808

central hill, unobserved by the French*; and the pluck and tenacity of the British officer and soldier did the rest. As Solignac crested the heights towards the British left he was met by Ferguson and Nightingale (who had moved on to that point), supported by Bowes, and was driven back with loss. Brennier's troops, eventually mounting the ridge, advanced on Ferguson's left rear, but were also repulsed, Brennier being made prisoner. In this battle the fire of Robe's artillery was very effective, and contributed greatly to the victory. All the attacks of Junot's columns were repulsed, and he was driven off the most direct road to Lisbon (through Torres Vedras) with loss.

To make clear the principle upon which meeting the column with the line rested, it is necessary to explain that at this period the French (preceded by skirmishers) attacked in heavy columns, the mass and weight of which must, it was considered, carry them through any thin line with which they could close. This view was not irrational, but it was based on the supposition that the column *could* close; while Wellington's conviction was, that when even a two-deep line† opposed to the column would stand firm, and, without being unnerved by its menacing and near approach, receive it with its superior fire, the column in reality could *not* close.

* On the plan, facing page 60, the troops are shown subsequent to this movement. In Napier's plan of this battle Anstruther is shown on the left of Fane; but in other plans (as here) upon his right.

† In an article on British and French tactics in 1808-15 (*United Service Magazine*, June 1910), "Denkmal" points out that on marching off from Figueras in August 1808, Wellington ordered the two-deep formation for the Line, which, except in special cases, he ever afterwards adhered to.

The column had this weak point, that its front ranks alone could use their muskets; but in the British "line" every man could use his musket freely, and while that portion more immediately opposite the head of the column, disregarding the threatening advance of such a dense mass of men, received them coolly with its fire, another part, wheeling up if possible and overlapping the column as it drew near, poured volleys into its flank or flanks.* Aug. 21, 1808

The firmness of the British infantry justified Wellington's confidence in it; and the result was, that throughout the battles of the Peninsular War and at Waterloo, the effect of the British musketry fire poured in from more than one direction by the line upon the French attacking columns, was such that consternation and confusion soon ensued in the latter, in which all order was rapidly lost.

The men, hampered by the dead and dying, were unable to act or advance; and then, with bayonets fixed, the line poured in a final volley and prepared to charge. The column seldom awaited that charge, though occasionally, as in this battle, it may have done so; but dispersed before it.

Vimiera is one of the battles in which the execution done with the actual bayonet itself is said to have been great; but the chief lesson taught by this, as well as by several other

* Oman points out justly the advantage which the British line received from the strong body of Light troops (skirmishers) with which Wellington usually covered it (see "Organisation of Wellington's Peninsular Army, 1809–14," Lecture at the R.U.S. Institution, March 9th, 1910); but occasionally (as at Waterloo on the first attack of the Imperial Guard) the opposing line, although apparently *not* covered with any strong body of skirmishers, still repulsed the column with great carnage.

Aug. 21, 1808

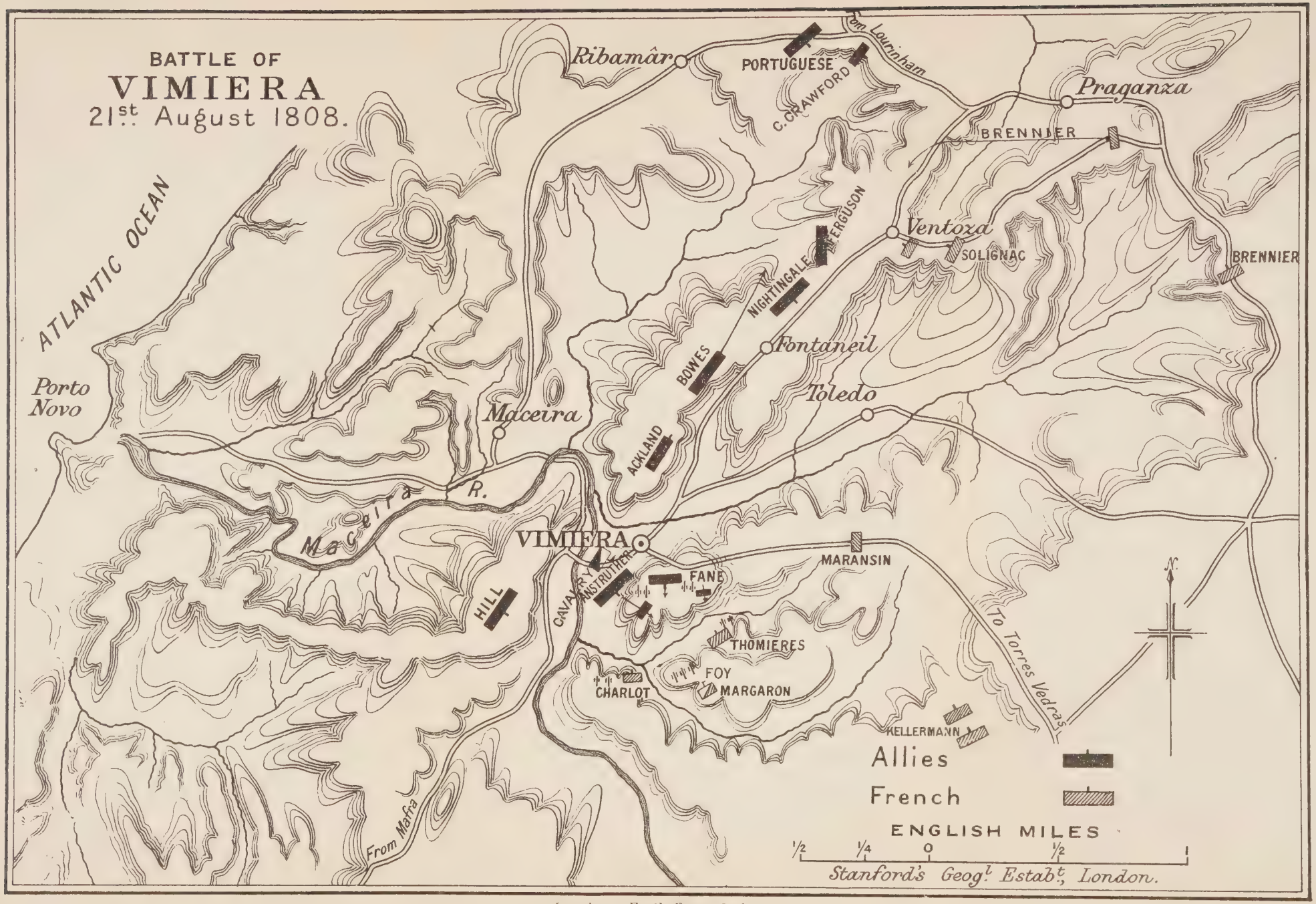
battles, is the great importance of securing in some way a superiority of musketry (or what is now "rifle") fire. When to that is added the power to resort also to the bayonet if necessary, the value of which weapon has been illustrated in even our most recent wars—for instance, during the South African campaign, in the sorties around Ladysmith—steady, disciplined infantry becomes truly formidable, and can generally decide the day.

The unexpected misfortunes which attended Junot's contemplated surprise of a position he had not reconnoitred have also marred some enterprises similar to his in our latest wars; but the lesson to be drawn from this is not that all risks should be nervously avoided. War is a game of risks, and risks must for great objects be boldly accepted; though all due precautions should be taken to minimize those risks.

The true lessons are that the dangers attendant upon "acting on conjecture," and the mishaps that have often and unexpectedly marred success, and may do so again, should be borne in mind; that no money or exertion should be spared to procure what information is possible; and that arrangements should be made, in the event of bad fortune, to withdraw in time before being irretrievably committed to a disastrous position.

The loss of the French in the battle of Vimiera was about 2,000 and 13 (some accounts say 14) guns; that of the Allies about 800.

"Vimiera," as a bar to the Peninsular medal and a battle-honour, commemorates this victory.



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At the close of the day the British, having defeated the enemy's attack, held the Torres Vedras road, while the bulk of the French had been driven off some distance to the east of it. Sir Arthur now strongly urged Sir Harry Burrard to follow up the victory by making a rapid march upon Torres Vedras with a portion of his force, in order to gain that pass, while the remainder pursued the enemy, driving him over the mountains to the east. Sir Harry, however, considered that a small portion only of the French army had been engaged, and was against further pursuit, judging that it would be more judicious to wait for Sir John Moore. The following morning Sir Hew Dalrymple joined, and took the command out of the hands of Sir Harry Burrard. Thus it was exercised by three different men within as many days, and in the immediate presence of the enemy, which was greatly against the adoption of any bold or decided course of action. On the 22nd, Junot, who had been allowed to make good his retreat by Torres Vedras upon Lisbon, sent an emissary to the British camp to negotiate for terms. This step was taken by him in consequence of the difficulty he experienced in keeping down the population of Lisbon, the fear he stood in of a forced retreat through the hostile country of Spain, and the probability of such a retreat being rendered inevitable by the arrival of Sir John Moore.

After an armistice a convention was agreed to, on August 30th, by which the French *consented to evacuate Portugal (giving up Lisbon,*

Elvas, Almeida, and all the fortresses), provided they were sent back with their artillery and arms to France.

COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN

The great importance of the defile of Torres Vedras in this campaign is strikingly prominent.

We may mention that the term "*strategy*" means the art of moving troops to the best purpose when not actually fighting with an enemy; and "*tactics*," the art of moving them when in battle.* Any point, therefore, not actually on a field of battle, the occupation of which would confer some special advantage upon its possessor, is called a "*strategical point.*"

The defile of Torres Vedras may be justly termed an important strategical point in this campaign. To get through or past that defile was the great difficulty. The facts subsequently made known prove that, had Sir Arthur's advice to Sir Harry Burrard to advance at once after Vimiera to Torres Vedras been adopted, that defile could have been seized, and Junot's army would then have been placed in a perilous position, its retreat to Lisbon being cut off by the Allies.

The unwillingness, though, of Sir Harry Burrard to risk an advance, arriving as he had done but recently on the scene, believing as he did that the French were stronger than they were, and knowing that after a few days Sir John Moore would arrive to strengthen him, can be readily understood.

* The two words are derived from the Greek: strategy from "strategos," a general; tactics from "taxis," an order of battle.

He had at the time (being Commander-in-Chief) greater responsibility than Sir Arthur, and few men have possessed the latter's talent for war.

The frequent change of commanders was very detrimental. In war there should be but one supreme head, changed as seldom as possible. "Nothing is more important in war," writes Napoleon, "than unity of command."

The Convention of Cintra, as it is commonly termed,* handed over Portugal to the British; and, though not negotiated by Sir Arthur Wellesley, who differed as to the wisdom of some of its conditions, he had signed the armistice which preceded it.

This convention excited a storm of indignation at the time in England, because Junot was not forced into an *unconditional* surrender, but was permitted to withdraw his army. But though some of the details of the convention were apparently unwise, it was as a whole a most advantageous one for the British cause. Junot's retreat through Elvas still lay open. The army depended mainly for provisions on the fleet, which a gale would have driven from the coast, and it was therefore everything to secure the entry of the ships at once from the sea into Lisbon harbour. If the convention had been refused and Junot driven to resistance, it would have been necessary to subdue the forts near Lisbon; after this, perhaps, to transport artillery up the Tagus to Abrantes, and thence 70 miles by land, to

* It was apparently negotiated mainly near Torres Vedras and signed at Lisbon.

besiege and take Elvas; and after that to take Almeida: and all this under the difficulties of bad roads and a great scarcity of every description of carriage. By the convention Portugal was set free, and its harbours could be used as a base for future operations against the French in Spain. Weighed against the moral and material success gained, it was of little consequence that Junot's small force had been permitted to depart to swell the already enormous armies of Napoleon. However, on account of the outcry raised in England, Sir Hew Dalrymple, Sir Harry Burrard, and Sir Arthur Wellesley* were all ordered to appear before a court of inquiry. They were acquitted of blame, and we have the recorded opinion of Napoleon himself, that the convention which concluded this campaign was, on the whole, a clear *advantage* to the English and a mistake on the part of Junot. "I was about," he says, "to send Junot to a council of war, when fortunately the English tried *their generals*, and so saved me the pain of punishing an old friend."

* He had arrived in England before this, having applied for leave of absence from Portugal partly upon the ground that "in the present state of the season" (the equinoctial gales being expected) "some time must elapse before the troops can enter into any other active operation" (Letter to Sir Hew Dalrymple, September 17th, 1808—*Wellington Despatches* [Ed. 1837], vol. iv. p. 158).

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CHAPTER IV

CAMPAIGN IN SPAIN, 1808-9

MOORE ENTERS SPAIN—NAPOLEON ADVANCES AGAINST HIM—RETREAT TO CORUNNA

On August 25th Sir John Moore landed at Maceira Bay. His troops increased the British army to about 32,000 men; and the command of it subsequently devolved upon him.

A delay of some weeks occurred before active operations were resumed, mainly owing to the indecision of the British Government with regard to their future plans. Early in October despatches reached Moore, informing him that 10,000 men were to be sent from England under Sir David Baird, to be disembarked at Corunna; and instructing him to take the field himself, when ready, with 20,000 men, form a junction with Baird, and then act in concert with the Spanish armies.

At about this period it appears to have been the belief of the Government, and of others in England, that the armies of Spain, 100,000 strong, were about to attack French forces of half that strength, and would probably expel them from the country before they could be reinforced.*

Moore considered that it would involve a delay, dangerous at that season,† and a precarious voyage

* Lord Castlereagh to Sir J. Stuart, November 1st, 1808—*Diary of Sir John Moore,* edited by Sir J. F. Maurice, vol. ii. pp. 311-13; also p. 46.

† Letter to Lord W. Bentinck, October 22nd, 1808—*Diary of Sir John Moore,* edited by Sir J. F. Maurice, vol. ii. p. 325.

Oct. 26, 1808

if he joined Baird by sea, and also that to procure transport in Galicia would be difficult; he therefore directed the latter general to march from Corunna through Galicia, his intention at first being to concentrate all his forces at Valladolid, Burgos, or whatever point might, later on, seem best.

Moore had now, as may be seen from the map, a very long march before him; the wet season was approaching; the roads were bad; he had to procure transport and supplies locally and complete equipment; Government had sent him little money, and the Portuguese distrusted all foreigners who could not pay in cash. To use the words of Napier, "the local rulers were unfriendly, crafty, fraudulent; the peasantry suspicious, rude, disinclined towards strangers, and indifferent to public affairs; a few shots only were required to render theirs a hostile instead of a friendly greeting." It resulted from these harassing obstructions that Moore, with his troops, was not fairly off from Lisbon to join Baird until October 26th, 1808, he being in command of that army which was destined "to cover itself with glory, disgrace,* victory, and misfortune" (*Autobiography of Sir Harry Smith*, edited by G. C. Moore Smith, 1902).

CHANGES WHICH HAD TAKEN PLACE IN THE MEANTIME IN SPAIN

Bearing this date in mind, we revert to the affairs of Spain, as a knowledge of the situation there at this period is necessary to render the events of the campaign clearly intelligible.

* Referring no doubt by this expression to the insubordination of some of the soldiery on the retreat to Corunna (see pages 75, 76).

The defeat of the French under Dupont at Baylen,* which occurred shortly before the landing of the British force, was only one among other checks now received by the French. Castaños after this marched upon Madrid; large bodies of Spaniards moved towards that city; Joseph, the Emperor's brother, now holding chief command, Napoleon having left for Paris, fell back in alarm behind the Ebro; the siege of Saragossa was raised; and the position of the contending forces on October 26th, 1808, was roughly this:— Oct. 26, 1808

The Spaniards: Right, Palafox (20,000), near Saragossa, and north of the Ebro; centre, Castaños (34,000), from Tudela to Logrono; left, Blake (32,000), towards Espinosa and Bilbao; Belvidere (11,000), near Burgos: some 23,000 were in Catalonia, and Reserves, 57,000, collecting near Segovia, Talavera, and Cordova. But these forces were unorganized, untrained, and without any supreme head.

The French, were concentrated on the defensive: 2nd Corps, Bessières, in the Basin of Vittoria, facing Blake; 6th Corps, Ney, north-west of Logrono; 3rd Corps, Moncey, north of Tudela. With 10,000 in Bayonne, and garrisons in Biscay and Navarre, they numbered 75,000, or a little over that strength.

The Spaniards now considered victory certain, and, with extravagant ideas of their military power, which, with their successes, as we have said, misled both themselves and the British Government, began

* See pages 29 and 49. The moral effect of Baylen was very far-reaching.

Oct. to Nov. 1808

to advance against Joseph, and even spoke of an invasion of France.

But early in October 1808, when Moore, at Lisbon, had been ordered to join Baird, Napoleon, burning to avenge Baylen, and retrieve the French position, was hurrying reinforcements towards the Pyrenees, which were to raise his armies in the Peninsula to over 250,000 men.

On October 30th he left Paris to join them. In October and November the raw Spanish levies were defeated in many directions*; Burgos was occupied; and the Emperor, detaching a corps towards the River Carrion to watch for the British, moved on Madrid, which Joseph had re-entered.

To revert to Moore's operations:—

Before marching from Lisbon on October 26th, he had reason to believe that he could safely concentrate his army behind the Spanish forces; the roads north of the Tagus were bad, and he had been assured they might become impracticable for artillery and heavy carriages. He therefore arranged his march as follows:—

The main body to move—part by Coimbra, Viseu, and Almeida (north of the Tagus), and part by Alcantara (south of the Tagus) and Coria—upon Ciudad-Rodrigo, and thence to Salamanca. Only the light baggage and ammunition for immediate use were to be sent with this portion of the force.

* Castaños at Logrono, October 27th; Castaños and Palafox at Tudela, November 23rd, though the latter most gallantly afterwards defended Saragossa (December 20th, 1808, to February 20th, 1809); Blake at Zornosa (or Tornosa), October 31st, at Espinosa, November 10th, and Reynosa, November 13th; Belvidere at Burgos, November 10th.

The artillery, the cavalry, and a park of several hundred carriages, were—by a detour adding some miles to the march—to go round south of the Tagus by Elvas and Badajoz, cross the river at Almaraz, and thence moving by Talavera, and (turning short of Madrid), through the Escurial Pass, unite with the main body at Valladolid, Salamanca, or wherever was decided. This portion of the force was placed under Sir John Hope. The bulk of the ammunition was to go with it. Oct. 27, 1808

Magazines were to be formed at Almeida, and reserve stores and provisions were directed to that point.

Some have said that Moore intended, from the first, to collect his entire force together at Salamanca, but his actual intention is given clearly in the following extract from his *Diary*, written just after leaving Lisbon on October 27th, 1808 :

"All the troops are out of Lisbon except two regiments, which will march to-morrow and the next day. I go to meet the troops* as they arrive by their different routes at Almeida, and shall collect them at Ciudad-Rodrigo and Salamanca, and wait until Hope's and Sir David Baird's corps get to Astorga and Espinar ;† where, according to circumstances, I can direct the junction of the whole at Valladolid, Burgos, or wherever else is thought best."—*Diary of Sir John Moore*, edited by Sir J. F. Maurice.

He had previously also, on October 22nd, written to Lord W. Bentinck that Hope was marching on

* His own columns.

† Hope was moving on Espinar, north of the Escurial Pass, Baird on Astorga.

Nov. 9–26, 1808

Madrid and Valladolid, and that he was to hear from him as he got near Madrid, and would then determine the place of junction. The point of concentration of the whole, therefore, was not at the moment of marching decided.

The great difficulty in obtaining any description of carriage hampered Sir John Moore, and compelled him to move his troops in small successive divisions.

Baird for similar reasons could not set out from Corunna until about November 9th, and then was obliged to march by but half a battalion at a time and hire carts day by day.

Sir John Hope, also (being in want of money and supplies, and losing many horses from glanders), was forced to move by six successive divisions, each one day's march behind the other.

In consequence of these many impediments to the concentration of the army, and in consequence also of Napoleon's successful advance upon Madrid, Moore's hopes that he might be able to concentrate without opposition from the enemy were disappointed. On reaching Salamanca himself, he found (November 15th) that the French had entered Valladolid. He then wished, if possible, to concentrate at Salamanca, but wrote to Baird and Hope to use their discretion as to whether this could be carried out, and how to act. We now find the British forces (on November 26th, 1808) separated in the following manner, in dangerous proximity to the enemy.

Moore at Salamanca.

Baird at Astorga, with his rear far behind, beyond Lugo.

Hope approaching the Escurial Pass, with his rear at Talavera. Nov. 26-28, 1808

On the same day, Napoleon, having dispersed the Spanish armies, was near Aranda, on the road to Madrid, and a French corps, under Lefebvre (about 30,000, *i.e.* equal in strength to Baird's and Moore's forces united), was descending the Carrion river towards Valladolid, which was occupied by advanced detachments.

Napoleon was ignorant of the proximity of the British; and Sir John Moore, on his part, was unaware of the exact position and great strength of the French.

On November 28th the British position became still more critical, for they retained much the same places, having delayed in order to close up the columns, and the French had moved forward.

Baird was still at Astorga waiting for his rear to close up.

Hope marching over the Escurial Pass, having halted for his rear.

Moore at Salamanca.

Napoleon at Aranda.

Lefebvre's corps, with a strong force of cavalry, was at Palencia and Valladolid, and had patrols close to Arevalo. Some French troops were also at Segovia.

On this date despatches reached both Moore and Hope, informing them of Napoleon's approach, and some of his successes over the Spaniards.* Moore

* Especially over Castaños and Palafox at Tudela (November 23rd). It was this which apparently decided Moore to retreat (*Diary of Sir John Moore*, by Sir J. F. Maurice, vol ii. p. 283).

Nov. 28 to Dec. 4, 1808

then, seeing that his position was one of peril, ordered Baird to fall back towards Corunna or Vigo; and resolved—after endeavouring to effect his junction with Hope—to retire into Portugal.

The situation of Hope was now critical. If he advanced he would have to make a flank movement of three days, with a heavy convoy, over a flat country, in presence of a powerful cavalry; if he delayed, a strong French corps would attack him; and, if he retreated, he would leave Moore at Salamanca without artillery or ammunition. The latter consideration outweighed all others, so without hesitation he pushed on, gained Avila across country, and Alba de Tormes, December 4th,* where he came in touch with Moore.

Moore's determination to retreat created very general indignation in Spain. Madrid was said to be making a desperate stand against Napoleon. As a matter of fact, it had fallen to him in two days; but, in the belief that it was holding out, Moore determined to make an attempt to concentrate with Baird at Valladolid, and then to boldly threaten the French flank and line of supplies in the direction of Burgos. By this, more than any other mode of action, he considered that he could aid the Spaniards and give their armies time to assemble, as Napoleon would, no doubt, turn from his advance to the south of Spain and Lisbon in order to attack him.

He therefore sent fresh orders to Baird to advance, but at the same time, as he saw that the whole army might soon be compelled to retire, he

* On this date Lefebvre was at Segovia, and Napoleon at Madrid.

made preparations for a retreat towards Corunna or Vigo, by directing magazines to be established at Benevente, Astorga, and Lugo. On December 11th he moved towards Valladolid, and on the 13th reached Toro and other points upon the River Douro, headquarters being at Alaejos, when an intercepted French despatch fell into his hands. Dec. 4–21, 1808

From this despatch he learnt that Madrid had fallen on December 4th, 1808, and that the French Emperor was distributing his armies in every direction, Lefebvre being at Talavera on the road to Lisbon, while a corps under Marshal Soult had been ordered, *viâ* Saldanha on the Carrion river, towards Benevente and the province of Galicia. He learnt also that the French had no idea of his own proximity, and that Soult's corps was weak and comparatively isolated.

Now (December 13th) he resolved to march on Toro and Mayorga—not Valladolid—and settled that the army, in falling back, should retreat by the roads through Galicia. Transports were directed to sail up the coast towards Vigo, and Baird to move in the direction of Mayorga. It was arranged, too, that some Asturian and Galician levies were to co-operate from the north, which they partially did; but their movements acted but indirectly in aiding the operations of Moore.

Moore reached Toro December 15th, and the concentration between him and Baird was accomplished successfully on December 20th, near Mayorga. Headquarters were established at Sahagun, December 21st, where in a brilliant cavalry combat the British cavalry (7th, 10th, and 15th Hussars)

Dec. 23–26, 1808

defeated the French; and the united force was now in numbers superior to the corps of Soult.

Moore from Sahagun, on the night of the 23rd, was preparing to attack Soult near Saldanha; but, though Soult's position was a dangerous one, that of the British army was becoming even more critical. Both Soult and Napoleon had become aware of the exposed situation of Moore. The former had urgently demanded reinforcements; and Napoleon, having changed all his plans, was endeavouring, with surprising energy, to surround his enemy. He had ordered Soult, after being reinforced, to march on Astorga, and Lefebvre's corps at Talavera to Salamanca,* while he himself, with 50,000 men and 150 guns, had left Madrid on December 22nd; and, although the Escurial Pass was choked with snow and most difficult of passage, arrived on the 26th at Tordesillas, on the Douro, cavalry scouts being pushed forward towards Benevente. He had thus, within five days, in winter and across high mountains, traversed more than 100 miles of ground.

From Tordesillas he wrote to Soult thus: "Our cavalry scouts are already at Benevente; if the English pass to-day in their position they are lost; if they attack you in force, retire a day's march; the further they proceed, the better for us."

But he was some hours too late. When he wrote (3 p.m., December 26th, 1808) † Moore had retired before Soult, and crossed the River Esla. On the night of the 23rd, just before attacking Soult, he had learnt his danger, and by falling back at

* Fortescue says the order was to be ready to march if necessary on Ciudad-Rodrigo.

† Believing the English to be still near Sahagun.

once had saved his army, his troops, while passing the river near Benevente, being attacked and harassed by the enemy's horsemen, who captured some of the baggage. The main body of the army crossed near Benevente by a bridge at Castro Gonzalo, afterwards destroyed, and portions at other points.* At this period of the retreat (as before at Sahagun), the British cavalry especially distinguished itself in combats with the French cavalry. Dec. 1808

When once across the Esla, Moore delayed for a short time to destroy some stores, and then commenced a rapid retreat towards Corunna; but this delay was sufficient to bring the headquarters of Napoleon close to Benevente.† Fortunately, a flood had caused the Esla to rise and become unfordable, and the French lost twenty-four hours before they could repair the destroyed bridge. It now was deemed important by Moore to gain the mountainous country beyond Astorga (where his small force could effectively delay a larger one) and also to reach the coast, before expected rough weather interfered with his embarkation. The troops were for this reason hurried on with celerity, some stores destroyed, and the sick left behind. Cold, wet, and frequently night marches, the want of regular supplies, and the sense of enforced retreat, now combined to shake the discipline of the army at times to a deplorable degree, and

* Craufurd remained on the left bank till the 28th, and blew up the bridge.

† Hoping at Astorga to *intercept* Moore (see orders to Soult and Ney, in *Campagne de l'Empereur Napoleon en Espagne*, 1808-9, par le Commandant-Breveté Balagny [1906], vol. iv. pp. 123, 124).

Dec. 1808 to Jan. 1809

the "retreat to Corunna" was at first marked by great disorder; but the Returns show that those regiments in which the disciplinary standard was recognized to be high, and in which the officers paid great attention to their men, although they were among those most heavily engaged, suffered comparatively less than others. Where discipline was relaxed the men broke out of the ranks, entering houses in search of food or drink, and numbers of these stragglers were killed by the enemy (Oman's *History of the War*, vol. i. p. 566). Napoleon pursued incessantly, and on January 1st, 1809, arrived at Astorga.* From this point, however, he suddenly left with a large portion of his army for France, entrusting to Soult, with 47,000 men, the further pursuit of Moore. The causes sometimes given for this are, the receipt of despatches, disclosing preparations for war in Austria, and intrigues in Paris; but by many the main reason is held to have been disgust that Moore had eluded his grasp.†

Soult pressed Moore with vigour, who showed a bold front against him at Lugo and other points. The retreat became more orderly, and at last, after great hardships, the British force reached Corunna

* On the retreat he had hoped for aid from Blake's force of 22,000 men, then under Romana (see page 20) in Leon, but the latter could not render any effective assistance, arriving with only 5,000 at Astorga, December 30th.

† Oman, vol. i. p. 559-60: "The great coup had failed," and "he would not be present at a *fiasco* or half-success." See also *Diary of Sir John Moore*, by Sir J. F. Maurice, vol. ii. p. 295 *et seq.* Balagny too—*Campagne de Napoleon en Espagne*, 1808-9 (1906)—thinks that Napoleon would personally have pursued Moore could he have felt confident of any brilliant success.

on January 11th, 1809—a small portion having been detached by Orense, upon Vigo, and the transports ordered up from the latter place to Corunna; where, however, in consequence of contrary winds, they did not appear until January 14th. A portion of the force had embarked when Soult attacked, and brought on the Jan. 11–16, 1809

BATTLE OF CORUNNA
January 16th, 1809
(See plan facing page 80)

In this battle the French numbered about 20,000,* with 40 guns, of which 11 were of heavy calibre; the British under 15,000, with only 9 light guns.†

The position taken up by Moore to cover the embarkation was at about a mile and a half from the harbour of Corunna, astride of the main road leading to it from Lugo. It was the best which offered for his purpose, and was in itself a fairly good one, running along the Monte Mero, a range of rocky hills, which extended on his right to a valley leading down to the harbour, and which, near his left, abutted on the river Mero (or Burgo).

But it is not sufficient that a position should have certain good points if these can be more or less neutralized by an enemy in possession of a still better one in its neighbourhood; nor can this disadvantage be overcome by occupying this better position instead, unless the force available is sufficient in numbers to occupy it adequately, and prevent it from being pierced or turned.

* Fortescue (vol. vi. p. 381), following Balagny, says over 16,000, and that 20 guns only came into action.

† But from the stores at Corunna Moore had issued fresh muskets and ammunition to his men, a great advantage in the approaching battle, as Soult's had suffered much from exposure to wet.

Jan. 16, 1809

Moore's position at Corunna illustrates this. In front of him, at a distance of under a mile, ran a somewhat higher range of heights (Palavia and Penasquedo), terminating as his own position did, in the valley at one end and the Mero at the other; and on the left (or west) of this was a rocky height from which guns could be brought to bear upon Moore's right and centre.

Soult, when he came up, occupied this range; his 11 heavy guns were placed on the rocky height, the bulk of his cavalry occupied the lower slopes of the valley on his left, and a portion were posted east of the Mero near Perillo. In the low ground between the opposing armies were two or three villages—among them Elvina and Palavia-Abaxo—of which Elvina, opposite Moore's right centre, was occupied by the British, and the others seized by the French.

The French position was the dominating one; but on account of its greater extent and distance from the harbour, Moore refrained from occupying it, deeming it less suitable to the numbers and purpose of his force. One great danger he had to fear was that his right might be turned along the valley and hills beyond it, and that the enemy might thus interpose himself between him and the harbour. Distance from the harbour would have increased this danger.

Thus circumstances compelled Moore to fight, in what was, relatively to the French, a disadvantageous position. But he made the best of his ground, with a display of light troops on his right where his line was thin, to watch and check the enemy's cavalry in that direction; and keeping two

divisions in reserve, he trusted to Baird and Hope on the high ground to repulse Soult's columns should they assault his centre and left. Jan. 16, 1809

And his plan was this: not simply to fight a defensive action, but, should opportunity offer, and the French attacks be repelled, to advance with all the troops he could spare up the valley on his right, carry, if possible, the rocky height on which the French guns were, and then, assuming the offensive against Soult's left flank, roll back his army upon the Mero.

What actually took place was that Soult's columns, at about 2 p.m., attempted with great force and energy to carry the position, and their guns caused severe loss to Moore. They drove the British out of Elvina; but, as at Vimiera, so here, they were repulsed from the high ground with carnage by the opposing British line. They also advanced down the valley by the British right, but being checked by the opposition they received, halted and hesitated.

The struggle was determined and prolonged, but in the end Elvina was retaken, the other villages secured, and the French repulsed; the order for the advance up the valley had been given, and the British troops were pressing towards the rocky height, when Moore was mortally wounded.

General Baird, second in command, was struck down also, and these occurrences caused, naturally, hesitation and delay in conveying orders.

Night was now approaching, and General Hope, upon whom the command then devolved, deemed it more prudent to suspend the advance, and,

Jan. 16, 1809

profiting by the confusion of the French, embark the army without loss.

This was done. The British sailed from Spain; and Soult's army, though beaten back, was not entirely crushed.

The British loss at Corunna was under 1,000, that of the French about 2,000.* "Sahagun," † "Benevente," and "Corunna," as bars to the Peninsular medal; and the first and last as battle-honours, commemorate the campaign.

Had Moore lived, it is probable that the French defeat would have been complete. He would doubtless have endeavoured to carry through his intended counter-stroke; and as it has since become known that the French ammunition was almost exhausted, the chances are that they could never, with guns and baggage, have passed the Mero, which was in full tide, and over which one bridge alone could be used for retreat.

"The heroic spirit of Moore," writes Napier, "went with the troops; his body rested with the enemy." He survived, however, sufficiently long to know of the French repulse, and to hope that "his country would do him justice."

Moore was a great general, with many noble qualities as a man, and as an organizer and a trainer of troops he was far in advance of his time. The regiments which he led in Egypt and elsewhere, and especially those of the "Light Division," which he personally trained at the camp at Shorncliffe in

* Fortescue places the losses of both sides as about equal, and considerably under these numbers.

† The 15th Hussars is the only regiment with the battle-honour "Sahagun."

BATTLE OF CORUNNA
16th January, 1809

English Miles
0 ¼ ½ ¾ 1

Stanford's Geog.l Estab.t, London.

N.

ATLANTIC OCEAN

159'

CORUNNA

Piraleiro

S. Margarita

S. Antonio

From St. Jago

Bionio

Reserve
FRASER

Fort S. Diego

Valley

S. Cristobal
261'

Heights of S. Cristobal
145'

441'

Reserve
PAGET

CATLIN CRAWFURD

Airis

Passage

Monte Mero

BAIRD

HOPE

† Spot where Moore fell

Elvina

291'

Piedralonga

River Mero or Burgo

Perillo

345'
Rocky ½ Height

516'

Palavia Abaxo

Mte Loreiro

Portazgo

Scicho

Hts. of Penisquedo
531'

459'

Hts. of Palavia

El Burgo

Allies
French

Villaboa

To Lugo

London: Hugh Rees, Ltd.

1805, and which afterwards, under both him and Wellington, fought so well in the Peninsula, form the best testimony to his exceptional ability.

Wherever his influence reached he inculcated a firm but not harsh discipline, responsibility in each rank for its special duties, and the importance of officers both knowing their own work and interesting themselves personally in their men. That influence is felt in more than one British regiment to the present day, and the name of Sir John Moore will never be forgotten in the British army.

"Great as a soldier, great as a patriot, and even greater as a man."—*Diary of Sir John Moore*, edited by Sir J. F. Maurice, 1904.

COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN

What we have said as to the battle of Corunna leads us to add here a few words as to what is meant by a "counter-stroke" in war. It means meeting the enemy not by a merely passive defence, but by striking at him, as when a swordsman defending himself does not content himself with guards alone, but strikes at his opponent.

In the "strategy," or larger movements of this campaign, Moore defended Spain by striking at Napoleon's communications, and was successful. In this battle he would probably, had he lived, have been as successful in the counter-stroke contemplated against Soult (by his attack on the rocky height), and have driven him on to the Mero.

Defence, to be of the most effective description, must be an active and not a merely passive one. Wellington is said sometimes to have fought as a

rule "defensive battles," and this is true, because the limited strength of his army and the object he had in view generally imposed this upon him. But of all generals (as these campaigns will show) he was the quickest to pass at the right time from the defensive to the offensive, and attack his opponent. When his adversary offered any opening he was upon him in an instant, and it is the power to at once seize an opening which makes the great leader, and often turns defeat into a rout.

In this campaign two portions of the British army under Moore and Baird (for the cavalry and artillery detached under Hope formed a part of Moore's force) were advancing from Lisbon and Corunna respectively, and eventually Salamanca became the point at which they hoped to concentrate.

When an army is thus advancing, not together along one single line,* but by portions, from different directions, with a view to unite, the point of their concentration should, in order to be a safe one, be so situated that the enemy cannot reach and defeat one portion before the other can come to its aid.†

Bearing this in mind, let us consider the position of the British and French armies on November 28th, 1808.

On that day, Baird was at Astorga, *five* marches from Salamanca, with his rear not yet closed up.

* *i.e.*, to use a technical term, by a "single line of operations."

† See pages 50 and 53 as to the advance of Loison and Laborde, hoping to unite towards Leirya, and failing to join each other before Wellesley had defeated the latter at Roleia.

Hope was at the Escurial Pass, *six* marches from Salamanca.

Lefebvre's strong corps was part at *Valladolid, only three* marches* from Salamanca, and part at Palencia—and had pushed out patrols almost to Arevalo. Some French were also at Segovia.

Moore himself was at Salamanca.

Thus a considerable portion of the French army was on this day actually much nearer to Salamanca than Baird or Hope; and had Napoleon been aware in time of the British movements, he might have fallen upon Moore at Salamanca with a powerful force, before either Baird could have joined him or Sir J. Hope, with his artillery, cavalry, and ammunition, have arrived. All three of the separated fractions of the British army were in danger of being attacked at a disadvantage.

Thus Salamanca had become, under the circumstances of the French position, not a safe point of concentration, and under other circumstances than those which actually prevailed blame might fairly be attached to the leader of an army who had placed it in the position held by the British on November 28th; but in this particular instance it cannot be imputed to Sir John Moore. The Government had sent Baird's force to Corunna,

* The distance in marches are taken from "Napier." It required, it appears, twice as long to reach Salamanca from the Escurial Pass as from Valladolid, although the distance as the crow flies is not much farther from the former place than from the latter. The nature of the country would account for this. This fact is an illustration of the necessity in military operations of considering distances in relation to the time it takes to march over them, and not according to the mere number of miles.

and had ordered Moore to join it, and aid the Spanish armies. Moore writes to Baird, November 28th, 1808: "I know that you should have landed at Cadiz, and I should have met you at Seville, where the army could have been united and equipped,* but it was ordered otherwise." As matters stood, however, he had the choice of but two alternatives; either to unite his own troops to those of Baird by sea—which, for reasons already given, he deemed inexpedient—or advance as he did. He had no intelligence from the Spanish Government of the passage of Napoleon's immense army over the Pyrenees, but had heard only that large Spanish forces, which he was to support, were facing the French (see page 67). He had therefore every ground to expect that he could safely concentrate with Baird, sending his cavalry and artillery by Badajoz and Almaraz, as he did. Moreover, he had been assured on all sides that guns could not be taken over the roads north of the Tagus.

In military works the technical, and rather involved, expression is often met with that one leader had over another the advantage of "interior lines."† This may, perhaps, be rendered sufficiently as meaning that the one leader, by virtue of possessing shorter routes than the other to some point (in the sense that he can get there more quickly ‡), can assemble at that point a force, before the other

* Without the enemy having the power to interfere.

† When the other would have "exterior lines" with regard to him.

‡ It is not the distance merely which signifies, but the time it can be traversed in. This varies with the nature of the ground and means of transport available.

can collect there troops adequate to oppose him with.

Lefebvre, when about Valladolid on November 28th, 1808, may be said to have possessed, without knowing it, "interior lines" over Moore, for he could have attacked the latter's force at Salamanca with a superior one before either Sir John Hope or Sir David Baird could have joined Moore.

When Moore, on advancing towards Valladolid, on December 11th, 1808, ordered magazines to be formed at Benevente, Astorga, and Lugo, and arranged, in case of necessity, for his ships to come round to some spot (such as Corunna) upon the coast of Galicia, he showed prudence and forethought. His retreat was deliberately planned, not unexpectedly forced upon him; and the wisdom of the precaution he took was exemplified when Napoleon subsequently cut him off from a retreat into Portugal.

Moore's *base was then changed* from Lisbon to Corunna, and the army retired by a new line of communication—the magazines provided contributing to its sustenance.* To be able thus to change a base in war is an evident advantage to a general, and multiplies the directions in which he can with safety act against the enemy. It is, however, comparatively seldom that such a change can be made, especially on an emergency. Sea power in this case rendered it possible, and it is the command of the sea which very frequently indeed confers it. Illustrations of the important value to Great Britain of this command of the sea, for

* This should be noted, for Moore has been criticised for neglecting to make due preparations for supply.

offence as well as defence, are afforded by this change of Moore's base from Lisbon to Corunna, and by the change of base by Lord Wolseley in one night from Alexandria to Ismailia, in the Egyptian War of 1882, as well as by many other campaigns.

When Moore determined, after receiving the intercepted French despatch on December 13th, 1808, to attack Soult's corps on the Carrion river, there was a greater intention in the attack than merely to defeat Soult. By its direction alone it was *menacing to the French communications*, and it was designed to draw Napoleon from the south to the difficult country of Galicia, and the corps at Talavera from its march towards Lisbon; thus saving at this crisis both Andalusia and Portugal from invasion. This able stroke fully succeeded. It is probable that the bold nature of the act made Napoleon suppose that the British forces were more numerous than they were; but he certainly arrested the movement of all his corps, turning that at Talavera towards the north, and marching against Moore; and was thus drawn away from the richest provinces of Spain.

In his *Lives of Lord Castlereagh and Sir C. Stewart* (vol. i. pp. 256–7) Sir A. Alison points out that the effect of this counter-stroke was "immense," and that it was accomplished by Moore "with 25,000 men against the French Emperor, who had 250,000 present and effective with the eagles in the Peninsula." It gave time to the Allies to organize defence, and thus bore with immeasurable weight upon the final issue of the great Continental

struggle, winning even "from Napoleon himself the tribute of unqualified approval."*

The direction of Napoleon's march, when he set out from Madrid against Moore, should also be particularly noticed. It was a struggle to cut off the British general from *his* communications, and to interpose between him and his lines of retreat, both at Lisbon and Corunna. He therefore went straight towards Tordesillas and Benevente. At the former point he had cut Moore off from Salamanca and Lisbon. If he had gained Benevente and Astorga *before* Moore, he would then have been nearer to Corunna than the latter. He was a few hours too late; and the English army slipped out of his hand.

It should be noticed that the mountainous country of Galicia, though increasing the hardships of the retreat, was yet favourable to Moore. The narrow mountain gorges offered positions where he could retard the pursuit of large numbers, and in which the French cavalry were almost valueless.

The inconvenience, and even danger, caused by a deficiency of supplies and transport, and the want of any organized supply and transport train, which at this period had not been got together, are illustrated in the delays at the commencement of this campaign. Nothing ties an army down so completely as a want of stores (food, ammunition, etc.), or transport. It cannot move freely until it gets them. It is the same thing now as it was in

* *Memoir of John Hookham Frere*, by Sir Bartle Frere. Sir F. Maurice also writes of this stroke of Moore as being "the boldest, the most successful, the most brilliant of all time"—see *Diary of Sir John Moore* (1904), vol. ii. p. 293 *et seq.*

the days of Moore. The defeats of the French early in the war of 1870-71 may be fairly ascribed to their being found, when war broke out, unequal to the task of rapidly supplying and moving their troops; and had our army in South Africa, in the first stages of the late war, been able to move more rapidly, it would have been an enormous advantage to those commanding it and to the country.

The difficulty of obtaining accurate information regarding an enemy's position in time of war is shown. The Spanish peasantry were, as a body, friendly to the British; yet the first intelligence which Sir John Moore (less than 150 miles from Madrid) received of the capture of that city, reached him through an enemy's intercepted despatch, some nine days after the city had fallen. An intelligence department (*i.e.* a department organized for the sole purpose of obtaining information) has always been a necessity to an army. Telegraphs, railways, steamers, and other means of quickly transmitting intelligence, have not altered this. The Austrians at Kœniggrätz, in 1866, and MacMahon at Wörth, in 1870, were both completely ignorant of the near neighbourhood of large bodies of the enemy. Our experience in South Africa affords many illustrations of the same thing.

There are two examples of the influence which purely accidental circumstances have in war,—viz. the interception of the French despatch—which happened in consequence of the officer who carried it having quarrelled with the postmaster of a village

about post-horses, and been killed in the brawl—and the flooding of the Esla.

As an instance of an extraordinary march, that of Napoleon from Madrid to Astorga is almost without parallel. In ten days he marched his 50,000 men 200 miles, crossing a mountain range by a pass covered with snow, and out of this a whole day was lost at the River Esla.*

The retreat to Corunna caused much despondency in England, and Sir John Moore's conduct of the campaign was at first blamed; but unreasonably so. He had with his small army diverted Napoleon's large forces from Andalusia and Portugal, thus saving Spain at a great crisis; and had escaped himself from his grasp—results very difficult of realization, but of an importance incalculable.

Only a few thousand British soldiers now remained in the Peninsula, but still the struggle was not abandoned, and Sir Arthur Wellesley was again sent out to Portugal, the exceptional genius for war of the latter being clearly illustrated by the plans he drew up about this period for the defence of Portugal, and which he afterwards so ably carried out.

* Napoleon's troops, therefore, *pursuing* across a snow-covered mountain pass, marched 200 miles in 10 days. Moore's, *retreating* over a less trying country, traversed 150 miles in 11 days, during which they had three days' rest (Oman, vol. i. p. 600). These marches, considered with that of some of Moore's very regiments to Talavera (see page 128) six months later, and the want of discipline on Wellington's retreat from Burgos in 1812, are especially instructive. They seem to indicate that the disorders of Moore's retreat were not, at all events, chiefly due to trying marches or physical distress, but principally to the distinction of moral between men dispirited by retreat and those elated by pursuit or by the expectation of battle.

CHAPTER V

CAMPAIGN IN PORTUGAL AND SPAIN, 1809
(First Period)

ADVANCE AGAINST SOULT—PASSAGE OF THE DOURO —EXPULSION OF THE FRENCH A SECOND TIME FROM PORTUGAL

Sir Arthur Wellesley landed for the second time in Portugal on April 22nd, 1809, more than three months after the embarkation of Sir John Moore's army at Corunna, and assumed command of the Allied forces. In this interval the situation of affairs in the Peninsula had undergone great changes, which we must briefly describe.

Napoleon, though he had left the Peninsula for France, still endeavoured to carry on from a distance the operations of his army in Spain; and for this reason the French marshals who were in command of the various corps composing it, were permitted to correspond directly with him, through the minister of war in France. Thus, though they were placed nominally under the supreme command of Joseph, the Emperor's brother, at Madrid, to whom instructions were imparted as to the future

conduct of the war, they were in reality, in a great measure, independent of him. Jan. to April 1809

The French forces in Spain had been sensibly diminished by the troops which Napoleon had taken away with him, but were still very large; for, after deductions had been made for the garrisons of important places and for detachments to guard the communications, there still remained about 100,000 men available for field operations in the distant parts of the Peninsula.

Three French armies were set apart for the subjugation of Portugal and Andalusia, including the reduction of the cities of Lisbon, Seville, and Cadiz. These far outnumbered the handful of Allied troops which, at the conclusion of the Corunna campaign, remained in Portugal under Sir J. Cradock, and were concentrated principally about Lisbon. These three armies were:—

Marshal Soult, in Galicia.

General Lapisse,* at Salamanca.

Marshal Victor, near Talavera.

The plan of campaign which they were directed to carry out was this:—

Soult was to invade Portugal from the north, capture Oporto, and march upon Lisbon.

Lapisse was to set out from Salamanca, and, by following the road through Ciudad-Rodrigo to Abrantes, clear the country upon his left flank.

Victor was to move upon Merida, taking with him a siege train; and aid Soult by threatening Badajoz or moving on Lisbon. After the capture

* Detached from the corps of Victor.

Jan. to April 1809

of Lisbon, Victor (Lapisse co-operating) was to take Cadiz and reduce Andalusia.

Joseph was in readiness, with a large force at Madrid, to strengthen or succour any corps which might require it.

Had this combination been rapidly carried out, the Allies in Portugal could hardly have resisted it; but it was not so carried out.

Soult could not march as soon as ordered, for he had many men in hospital; his gun-carriages required repair; his ammunition was running short; his soldiers were in want of shoes and equipment; and he had little money. The rainy season was now at its height, and muddy roads and swollen streams retarded his progress. Having passed through Vigo and Tuy, and left garrisons in those places to preserve his communication with Galicia, he attempted to cross the Minho near its mouth. In this attempt he did not succeed, for the river was a raging torrent; and some Portuguese militia opposing his passage, he was compelled to make a détour to Orense, whence he descended upon Chaves, where he established a hospital and depôt. From this point he moved by Braga on Oporto. After some bloody contests with the Portuguese troops and peasantry, he captured Oporto on March 29th, 1809.

It had been expected that he would have reached this place several weeks earlier; and Victor and Lapisse, who had received no intelligence of his movements, had remained in comparative inactivity. Soult also, when he reached Oporto, having no news of Victor or

Lapisse, halted in that city, hesitating to advance further. April 22, 1809

Thus, the French marshals acted without concert and undecidedly, not aiding one another, and not pushing forward with energy. It was about this time also that they first began to give evidence of a wish to evade the authority of Joseph and of the existence of a jealous feeling among themselves, while there is a doubt whether Soult was not more or less intriguing with a party who were desirous of creating him King of Northern Lusitania (Oman's *History of the Peninsular War*, vol. ii. p. 274, etc.). Left to a great extent in independent command by Napoleon, and ranking, with some justice, the military talents of Joseph beneath their own, these marshals frequently remonstrated against the latter's decisions, and found pretexts for neglecting his orders. Ambitious, too, of personal distinction, they were reluctant to serve under one another (thus occupying a subordinate position) for the common good, and as a result of this want of union, and of the difficulty of procuring information in a hostile country, the French armies moved slowly and without concert.

After Sir Arthur Wellesley landed (April 22nd, 1809) they held the following positions :—

Soult, about 20,000, still at Oporto, with an advanced force behind the Vouga ; but the Spanish and Portuguese insurgents had closed upon his rear, and taken Vigo, containing the military chest, and Chaves with its magazines.

A part of his force (under General Loison) had

April 22, 1809

just been detached to Amarante, on the Tamega, to keep open the road to Braganza. It was an object to Soult that this especial line of retreat should be kept open, for feeling unsafe with regard to his position, and despairing of reaching Lisbon, he began to meditate a move by Braganza towards Salamanca and Ciudad-Rodrigo, whence he could more readily communicate with Victor.

Victor and Lapisse were near Merida, having now united; for the former had refused to advance until the latter had been ordered by Joseph to join him from Salamanca. They numbered jointly about 30,000 men, Victor being in command.

It is now time to sketch the changes which had taken place in the situation of the British and their allies.

When the victories of Napoleon over the Spaniards, the retreat of Sir John Moore to Corunna, and the approach of the French armies towards Portugal became known in the latter country, consternation was at first general.

But, as time went on, energetic preparations under General Cradock and others were made for resistance, and, the Portuguese having requested that British officers might be appointed to the higher commissions in their army, an organized force, under General Beresford with Portuguese rank of Marshal, and of which each battalion was placed under a British officer, was soon in the field.

The militia was called out, volunteer corps were

enrolled, reinforcements were sent from England, and the wrecks of the Spanish armies, which had suffered many reverses and been driven south of Tagus, began again to collect under arms. April 22, 1809

The Allied forces, then, at the date of Sir Arthur Wellesley's landing, held the following positions:—

The British (including German auxiliaries) 22,000 strong, were at Leirya.

Beresford's Portuguese troops, 16,000, about Thomar.

The Portuguese militia and levies, a few thousands, principally in the north of Portugal, observing Soult; a force under Silveira being at Amarante, on the River Tamega.

The Spanish troops had yielded up most of the strongholds of Catalonia, but were assembling under General Cuesta,* to the south of the Tagus; under Venegas in Andalusia; near Carolina; and elsewhere.

After his arrival in Portugal, Sir Arthur Wellesley had to decide against which of the French marshals (*i.e.* Soult or Victor) he would advance, and he determined to march against Soult; but in order to provide for the safety of Lisbon during his absence, he sent a small force of British to be joined by Portuguese (over 10,000 in all) to Abrantes and Alcantara, and gave directions,—(1) that if Victor, moving northward, should endeavour to cross the Tagus and follow the road on the right bank to Lisbon, the bridges were to be destroyed and his progress opposed; (2) that if

* Who had been previously overthrown at Medellin, March 28th, 1809.

May 1809

he should advance by Badajoz, the force at Abrantes was to fall back on Lisbon, and Cuesta with the Spaniards to follow him in the rear.

He incorporated some of Beresford's Portuguese battalions in each British brigade, but left the remainder under the personal command of that marshal. Provisions were sent round to the mouth of the Mondego, and on May 5th, 1809, the army, having concentrated at Coimbra, advanced to carry out the following plan of campaign.

Beresford, with 6,000 British and Portuguese, marching by Viseu and Lamego, was to move towards Amarante (see Map III., facing page 106), from which it was now known that Loison (see page 93) had driven Silveira, while Sir Arthur, with about 20,000 men, endeavoured to pass the Douro near Oporto. The object of detaching Beresford was to draw attention from Sir Arthur's movements, cut off Soult's retreat through Braganza, and separate him from Victor.

Sir Arthur Wellesley's troops met the advanced posts of Soult some miles south of the Douro, and drove them across that river. Soult now concentrated upon the right bank, about Oporto, and having destroyed the only bridge which existed, and brought over all the boats which he could find to his own side of the stream, believed himself safe, and merely watched the Douro at its mouth, imagining that the British might attempt to cross there by means of their ships and fishing-boats.

Sir Arthur had no facilities with his army for throwing a bridge over the Douro, which, opposite Oporto, was very rapid and about 300 yards wide;

yet it was important for him to pass the river at once, for Soult was already making preparations for a retreat towards Braganza, and might fall upon Beresford with overpowering numbers. While reconnoitring Soult's position he discovered that a ford existed near Avintas, about three or four miles up the river. He had, moreover, observed that the French watch above Oporto was a careless one. Soult, convinced, as we have said, that the British would endeavour to pass the river near its mouth—*i.e.* below Oporto—by means of the fishing smacks available there; and having also secured very many (he believed all) of the boats above the city, considered himself safe from surprise in that direction, and took up his station in a house west of Oporto, whence he had a commanding view of the lower course of the river. By good fortune an officer of Sir Arthur's staff had discovered a small skiff on the left bank a short distance above Oporto, and crossing in it unperceived, had managed to find and bring over to the Allied side three large barges. May 1809

The Douro—see plan of its passage facing page 104—takes, close above Oporto, a sharp bend round some prominent rocky ground on the left bank, called the Sarea Rock, and opposite to this rock on the right bank is an isolated building called the Seminary. Sir Arthur had noticed that from the Sarea Rock he could sweep the opposite bank with his guns, and that its position hid the passage of the barges [at the dotted line in the plan] from the French in Oporto. Oman, who visited the ground, points out also that the Douro,

May 12, 1809

where the passage was effected, runs between precipitous cliffs nearly 200 feet high, and that an observer on the French side had to come to the very edge of the cliff to see the river at all. Soult apparently had no men so placed, but had his outposts some distance back from the cliffs.* Sir Arthur noticed also that the Seminary was a strong building capable of holding two battalions, and while easily accessible from the river, was surrounded by a high wall on its other three sides. Under these circumstances he collected his troops with secrecy behind the Sarea Rock, placed 18 guns in battery on its summit, and sent General Murray with one brigade to Avintas, with orders to seek for and send down more boats, and then to pass at that point himself, if possible.

Intelligence was soon brought to him that Murray had found boats, and upon the receipt of this Sir Arthur proceeded to carry out one of the most daring passages of a river on record.

PASSAGE OF THE DOURO

May 12th, 1809.

(See plan facing page 101)

Sending an officer and twenty-five men across to the Seminary in one of the barges, he reinforced them as quickly as possible, and three boat-loads had got across before Soult took the alarm. Then the French, streaming out from Oporto, bore down

* *Peninsular War*, by Charles Oman, 1903, vol. ii. p. 5 (Preface). The precipitous character of the cliffs east of and opposite to the Sarea Rock is indicated by the shading on the plan.

upon the Seminary, and endeavoured to carry it by storm, but the English guns now swept the left of the building, and confined the assault to but one side of it, where the musketry of the defenders drove the French back. In the meantime, the inhabitants of Oporto, glad to be delivered from the French, came over to the left bank with several great boats, and General Sherbrooke, with the Guards, crossing the river in them opposite Oporto, entered the city, passed through it, and took the French in rear, while in the other direction Murray's force soon appeared in sight, coming from Avintas. The French, surprised on all sides, and afraid of being cut off from the road to Amarante, were thrown into confusion; but at length, abandoning their sick and 50 guns in Oporto, they succeeded in making good their retreat in great disorder past Murray's force. The panic was so great among them, that one squadron of the 14th Dragoons, under Major Hervey, succeeded with little loss in cutting its way through three battalions of infantry marching in a hollow road. May 12, 1809

For the passage of the Douro the 14th Hussars, the Buffs (or East Kent), the 48th (Northamptonshire), and the 66th (Berkshire) Regiments bear the battle-honour of "Douro."

The situation of Soult's army was now very critical. The only roads *practicable for guns* by which he could retreat led through Amarante—one by Guimarens and Braga to Ponte de Lima (see Map III., facing page 106), the other through Chaves towards Orense. The British from Oporto

May 12-15, 1809

could, if they marched northward at once, reach Braga before him, and the Portuguese now held Chaves.

It was already doubtful whether he could succeed in saving his baggage and artillery; but when he was informed that Beresford was in occupation of Amarante, he saw no hope of doing this. From that moment his sole aim was to save his men; and so, destroying all his artillery, and much baggage and ammunition, he took in haste to the mountain paths over the Sierra Catalina on his left, and by following them reached Guimarens, where he was joined by Loison. To understand his movements from this point they must be followed in some detail, but to do this will be repaid by the military lessons which they teach. Still keeping to the mountains he made for Carvalho Este, his object being to avoid both Braga and Chaves and strike up northward through Salamonde, where he would enter the high road to Montalegre. Sir Arthur, in the meantime, had sent orders to Beresford (whom he supposed, as was the case, to be at Amarante), to move upon Chaves, in order to cut Soult off should he attempt to take that road; and to Murray, whose movements after crossing at Avintas had been rather slow and undecided, to make for Guimarens. He himself halted two days at Oporto, and then pushed on to Braga.

On May 15th, 1809, Sir Arthur was at Braga, Murray at Guimarens, and Beresford near Chaves, the latter having upon his march detached some Portuguese to occupy Ruivaens. The capture of Soult now appeared certain; but the French

general, on the 16th, came out from the mountains at the point of Salamonde, passing between his pursuers and eluding both Sir Arthur and Beresford. May 16-18, 1809

Still, his chances of final escape were but slender. From Salamonde there were only two lines of retreat into Galicia—one by Ruivaens to Montalegre, the other by Ponte Nova to Montalegre, the latter passing by a narrow bridge over the mountain torrent of the Cavado, which runs in a deep defile. Soult learnt that the bridge near Ruivaens had been broken by the Portuguese, and so made for that of Ponte Nova, and was fortunate enough to find it partially standing. By a daring night surprise he forced a passage at this point and repaired the bridge, but afterwards had to fight his way across a second bridge spanning a deep gulf, through which ran an affluent of the Cavado. This bridge was so narrow that only three persons could pass abreast.

While Soult was forcing his way across this, which he did with great bravery, the English guns coming up from Braga opened upon his rear, and the French, crowding together upon the bridge, forced each other in terror into the gulf below, losing many men.

Thus, enduring the extreme of every kind of misery and hardship, Soult escaped finally with the bulk of his men from the Allies, and reached Montalegre on May 18th, just in time to elude Beresford, who was at Chaves—only one march off—on the 17th.

We need follow his subsequent retreat no further than to say that he thence gained Orense, and

afterwards Lugo, where he was joined by Ney, "being at this time," says Jomini, "in a far worse condition than General Moore six months earlier."

Immediately after this success against Soult, Sir Arthur was obliged to return to Abrantes, as Victor and Lapisse had moved forward and succeeded in forcing the passage of the Tagus at Alcantara, where the bridge—a very old Roman one of great strength—had been partially blown up. Upon the approach of the English general, Victor retired to Talavera, removing a bridge of boats at Almaraz.

The defence of the northern parts of Portugal was now entrusted to the Portuguese levies; Beresford was sent to Ciudad-Rodrigo; and Sir Arthur, after a month's delay to reorganize his army and procure money, was again ready to take the field.

COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN

The reason why Sir Arthur Wellesley at the commencement of the campaign advanced against Soult in preference to Victor should be understood.

Victor, from his position and numerical strength, threatened Lisbon more than Soult, so that a victory over him, by freeing Lisbon and the south of Spain, would, in several respects, have greater results than a success in the north.

But, on the other hand, the recovery of Oporto and of the rich country about the Douro, whence the army could obtain supplies, would raise the spirits of the Portuguese, and be of material ad-

vantage to the army. The British, also, might be almost certain of arriving close to the Douro before their march could be made known to Victor, who, being at Merida, was a long way off from Lisbon. There was thus a probability that, should Victor move from his position, time would be given for a successful attack against Soult, and the return of the army to oppose him.

The passage of the Douro is not to be considered as a mere instance of good fortune attendant upon hazardous daring. Sir Arthur Wellesley saw the careless watch kept by Soult about Oporto, and took advantage of it. It was *not, however, until he had become aware of Murray's passage* higher up the Douro at Avintas, and of his having found boats, that he ordered his own troops to cross in the barges. He knew then that Murray would soon be in a position to support him, and his acquaintance with the courage of his soldiers fully justified him in believing that until that time they could hold their own. The fire of the artillery from the left bank would aid them in doing so; the Seminary was a strong building; and while they occupied it the enemy could not interfere with the passage.

Had Sir Arthur moved his whole army to cross at Avintas, its march would have been discovered; had he left the portion that did cross there to advance unaided, it would most probably have been overwhelmed and driven back. By the combined passages the French were deceived, a mutual support secured, and a brilliant success

realised. The French, writes Oman, "had no conception of the enterprise of the man with whom they had to deal."—*Peninsular War*, vol. ii. p. 332.

General Murray is censured by military writers for want of talent and boldness, in not pressing more rapidly from Avintas upon Soult's columns when they were retreating upon the Amarante road. Had he fallen upon them in front while Sir A. Wellesley's troops pressed them in rear, the complete rout of the French must have ensued. The opportunity offered to him, says Napier, "might have tempted a blind man. How would his want of hardihood have appeared if Loison had maintained Amarante? Soult would then have reached Zamora or Salamanca in good order, and have turned on Ciudad-Rodrigo, perhaps have taken it, and would certainly have occupied the British army on that side." This failure upon Murray's part was, however, less serious in its consequences to the Allies, on account of the seizure of Amarante by Beresford.

The delay of Sir Arthur Wellesley (with the main body of his force) for two days in Oporto, before pursuing Soult, and the failure of the Allies to intercept the French, either at Salamonde or Montalegre, and so cut them off from Galicia, requires explanation.

The delay at Oporto arose from many causes. The army had already marched eighty miles in four days, skirmishing constantly with the enemy, and the men and animals were exhausted. It had outmarched its ammunition, provisions, and

baggage; and the artillery and stores of all kinds had to be brought from the left to the right bank of the Douro. Sir Arthur, also, was unaware of the exact, though he knew the general, position of Beresford, and could not tell whether Soult, if he secured his retreat through Amarante, would take the direction of Braga or that of Chaves. If he had pursued Soult with his whole force along the narrow road to Amarante, hemmed in between the Sierra Catalina and the Douro, he must have merely followed that marshal (who could move as rapidly as himself) in one column; and he therefore preferred to trust to Murray and Beresford to press upon and intercept the French; while he himself, as soon as he could gain certain intelligence of the direction taken by them, would, by forced marches, endeavour to cut them off either at Braga or Chaves. In the meantime he could give his troops rest, which they stood much in need of, and get over his artillery and stores.

Napier considers that Beresford, had he acted with greater rapidity, might have forestalled Soult, both at Salamonde and Montalegre. He states that Beresford, when he left Amarante (to move towards Chaves, and cut off Soult) had an excellent map of the country to consult, and should have detached a force to occupy Salamonde, seeing the importance of that point, and that there was a direct road (through Freixim) to it. It is a weighty reply, however, to the criticism above-mentioned, that Beresford was making a forced march with tired Portuguese troops, under great difficulties of roads and weather; and that Sir

Arthur Wellesley himself says (*Wellington Despatches*, iv. 343) that he (Beresford) anticipated exactly the instructions which he sent to him, and carried them out on his own initiative, thus imputing no want of skill or energy to him. Beresford is also blamed for not having taken more certain measures *to ensure the destruction* of the bridge at Ponte Nova, and the second narrow one over which Soult got with so much difficulty. One of his staff officers did attempt, with some Portuguese, to destroy the latter bridge, but he had not means at his disposal to accomplish it in time. Earthworks were thrown up to defend it, but these were carried by the French.

The importance in this campaign of the points of Amarante, Salamonde, and Montalegre is to be noticed.

By the occupation of Amarante, and the destruction of the bridge over the River Tamega, Sir Arthur could close this line of retreat to Soult, and it was thus, even at the beginning of the campaign, an important strategical point. But Soult had still *another line of retreat* open to him —viz. that by Braga.

After Sir Arthur, however, had surprised Soult by the passage of the Douro, and *cut him off from Braga*, Soult's sole chance of saving his artillery, baggage, or ammunition—that is, of avoiding a ruinous disaster—was that Amarante should be held against the Allies. Sir Arthur, by having secured Amarante, crippled his adversary and decided the campaign.

Loison, the commander of the force which Soult

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had detached to hold this point, does not appear to have appreciated fully the value of the position, but to have retired before Beresford after a feeble resistance. He should, under the circumstances, have fought for the post to the last extremity; and when he abandoned it, writes Napier, "he relinquished all claim to military reputation."

When Soult in his retreat was making for Salamonde, and afterwards Montalegre, each of these points became of much importance strategically—for upon whether he could pass them or not, depended the possibility of his saving his army.

The influence which the topography of a country exercises upon military operations is illustrated by the manner in which Sir Arthur Wellesley was enabled, through his having possession of the passages over the Sierra Estrella, and across the Tagus at Abrantes and Alcantara, and also of the frontier fortresses on the two great roads south and north of the Tagus (see pages 41 and 95), to screen his movements from the French, and retard Victor's advance towards Lisbon in his rear.

It is also illustrated in the difficulty which the mountainous character of the country north of the Douro created both for Soult in his retreat, and for Wellesley in his pursuit.

The result of this first period of the Campaign of 1809 was to free Portugal for the second time from the French—who were thwarted in their efforts to keep possession of the country.

CHAPTER VI

CAMPAIGN IN PORTUGAL AND SPAIN, 1809
(Second Period)
ADVANCE INTO SPAIN—TALAVERA—RETURN TO PORTUGAL

By the beginning of July, 1809, the French armies had been reinforced by fresh conscripts, and the positions they had assumed in the Peninsula with their strength were approximately as follows:—

At Madrid, under King Joseph (Reserve, etc.), about 10,000; near Toledo, Sebastiani (4th corps), 20,000; near Talavera, Victor (1st corps), 25,000,—making in all, in Madrid or covering it to the south, over 50,000. In addition:—

Soult (2nd corps), Ney (6th corps), and Mortier (5th corps), respectively at Zamora, Astorga, and Valladolid—also about 50,000 in all. Sir Arthur Wellesley was unaware of the recently assumed positions of the two last corps, or that the Emperor had placed all three under Soult.

In addition to the above forces, other French corps occupied the northern and eastern provinces of Spain, but these were sufficiently employed in defending themselves and their communications from the various bands of Spaniards who, collecting

in large bodies in the mountain ranges, carried on a constant petty warfare,* capturing convoys and murdering their escorts whenever an opportunity presented itself. The operations of these guerilla bands, under Mina, the Empecinado, and various other chieftains, were of great service to Spain; but although they were a constant thorn in the side of the French, causing them great losses, they never succeeded in thwarting important combinations, having, when joined together in very large bodies, the inconveniences of regular armies without their discipline or unity. For this reason their movements will be but briefly alluded to. June to July 1809

The Allies, also, had obtained some reinforcements, and their positions were:—

Sir Arthur Wellesley, at Abrantes—22,000.

Beresford, with some Portuguese and Spaniards, about Ciudad-Rodrigo—20,000.

Sir Robert Wilson, with some light Portuguese troops (forming the Lusitanian legion), between Salamanca and Avila—4,000.

Cuesta, with a Spanish army, near Mirabete, on the Tagus—about 40,000.

Venegas, with some more Spaniards, near Carolina, in Andalusia—25,000.

A reinforcement of about 8,000 men was also expected up shortly from Lisbon by Sir Arthur, and some of the old regiments which had served under Moore were to form part of this force. Lord Seaton (then Colonel Colborne) writes on

* Called "guerilla warfare," from the Spanish word "guerilla,"—"little war."

July, 1809 July 9th, 1809: "Sir Arthur Wellesley is now pursuing the French with troops essentially improved at least, if not formed, by Sir John Moore."

While the hostile armies were thus situated, the news of a disastrous check to Napoleon in Austria reached the Peninsula. The battle of Aspern had been fought upon the Danube, and the French arms had experienced a serious—though, as it afterwards proved, but a temporary—defeat. The spirit of the Allies rose high, and the moment appeared an opportune one to strike a blow for the deliverance of Spain.

Sir Arthur Wellesley was, as we have said, unaware of the vicinity of Mortier and Ney to Soult. He considered the latter to *be alone*, and in his decision upon the plan of operations which he now entered upon, this belief, and also some peculiarities connected with the topography of the country, greatly influenced him.

The communications between the province of Leon—where he knew Soult to be—and the valley of the Tagus, were few and indifferent. Over the intervening mountains there were but two passes deemed to be practicable for artillery. These were, *Perales* and *Baños*, through both of which roads descended upon Plasencia. Sir Arthur considered that the Spanish troops of Cuesta, and others, supported by Beresford if necessary, could hold these passes against any attack of Soult, and that, his own left flank being thus protected, he might—joining with the main body of Cuesta's

army—advance up the Tagus against Victor and the French near Madrid, while Venegas co-operated by marching against Sebastiani, from the south. Sir Robert Wilson was to try to harass Joseph, and distract his attention by moving by the Escurial Pass towards Madrid. July 20–27, 1809

Cuesta agreed that the Spaniards should occupy these passes with four battalions, he himself contributing two for Baños, and Beresford having his eye on that of Perales; also that the armies of Cuesta and Sir A. Wellesley should march in concert. On this occasion Sir Arthur advanced with but little transport and without supplies of food, for he had ascertained that the country could support his troops, had sent officers to purchase mules, and been assured by the Spanish authorities that provisions would be provided.

Sir Arthur marched, according to the plan agreed upon, by Plasencia, and united, on July 20th, 1809, at Oropesa, with Cuesta, the latter having crossed the Tagus at Almaraz (where he restored the bridge of boats) and at Arzobispo. The combined forces then moved against Victor, who fell back to a position behind the Alberche, Cuesta pursuing. There Sir Arthur proposed to attack him (July 23rd), but Cuesta refused. The French then retired further (July 24th), followed by Cuesta, but, Joseph coming forward to Victor's support, Cuesta was driven back with loss (July 26th), until the French pursuit was checked by the divisions of Sherbrooke and Mackenzie forming Wellesley's advance. On the next morning Sherbrooke and Cuesta retired to a position occupied

July 27, 28, 1809 by Wellesley near Talavera, which the French attacked that afternoon.

BATTLE OF TALAVERA

July 27th and 28th, 1809

(See plan facing page 118)

In this severely contested battle the French (numbering about 50,000 men, including 7,000 cavalry), with 80 guns, consisted of—

The corps of Victor, including the divisions of Ruffin, Villatte, and Lapisse ;

The corps of Sebastiani, including his own division (Sebastiani's) and those of Valence and Leval ;

A reserve brigade (Dessolles) ;

The cavalry (Latour Maubourg) ; and

The King's Guards.

The Allies numbered about 54,000 men (including 10,000 cavalry), with 100 guns, of which force the British formed about 20,000 with 30 guns, and the Spanish 34,000 with 70 guns.

They were thus drawn up: The Spaniards on the right, in the town and environs of Talavera. Olive and cork woods, with enclosures, walls, ditches, and felled trees, concealed and strengthened this part of the position so that in the battle the French threatened it merely.

Next to the Spaniards came the British (and Germans), formed eventually in two lines, their left resting upon the height of the Cerro de Medellin, and separated from the mountain ridge of the Sierra de Montalban (or Segurilla) by a rugged valley.

The 4th division (under Campbell) was on the right, including his own brigade and that of Kemmis. July 27-28, 1809

Then the 1st division (Sherbrooke), including the brigades of H. Campbell, Cameron, Low, and Langwerth—the last two Germans.

The 2nd division (Hill), including the brigades of Tilson and Stewart, on the left—forming at first, through error, on the northern base of the Cerro de Medellin, but afterwards moving to its summit.

The 3rd division (Mackenzie), including his own brigade and that of Donkin, was in advance beyond the Casa Salinas.

The cavalry, under Payne, consisting of the brigades of Anson, Cotton, and Fane, was originally placed along the front, Anson being with Mackenzie; but in the end Anson and Fane took post behind the British left, and Cotton behind the centre. The artillery was distributed along the front.*

Running down the valley on the left, and passing along the whole front of the Allied position to the Tagus at Talavera, flowed a small stream called the Portina rivulet. This was fordable in many places, but ran in the upper part through a deep ravine.

The ground in advance of the Allied centre and left was rough, but comparatively open, and where the British right joined the Spaniards was an

* It is desirable to draw the attention of students of the detailed tactics of this battle in larger works to what becomes sometimes confusing, viz. (see above) that in Campbell's Division was his own (A. Campbell's) brigade; in Sherbrooke's Division, H. Campbell's Brigade; in Mackenzie's Division, his own (Mackenzie's) brigade; and in Sebastiani's (French) Corps, Sebastiani's Division.

July 27-28, 1809

isolated mound (the Pajar de Vergara) crowned with an unfinished earthwork, on which some guns were placed.

Joseph, who was anxious that the Allies should not have time to strengthen their position, did not stop to reconnoitre, for which Napoleon subsequently blamed him. His light troops came on so suddenly, about 2 p.m. on the 27th, that the Allied outposts were rapidly driven in, at first in some confusion. Sir Arthur, who had ridden in advance to observe the country, very narrowly escaped capture, and the enemy was only checked with difficulty and the loss of 400 men.

One brigade (Mackenzie) of Mackenzie's Division fell back to the position, in 2nd-line behind Sherbrooke; the other (Donkin) to the Cerro de Medellin, then unoccupied, but where Hill came up later.

Facing the Allied left, on the French side of the Portina rivulet, was an opposing range of hills (the Cerro de Cascajal), which Victor seized.

Before sunset a determined attack had been made upon the centre and left of the British position, and that part occupied by the Spaniards had been threatened, upon which several Spanish regiments—though not all, for some stood fast—fled panic-stricken towards the rear.

The struggle was severe and close upon the left, the French at one moment having gained the summit of the heights and nearly turned the Allied flank; but, Hill coming up, the attack, before darkness had completely set in, had been repulsed, and

the enemy's broken troops had retired beyond the Portina stream, each force having lost nearly 1,000 men. July 27-28, 1809

On the morning of the 28th the battle was again renewed, chiefly against the left, but all efforts to dislodge the British posted there failed; and having lost over 1,500 men the French once more fell back, covered by their artillery.

For some hours hostilities were suspended. The day was intensely hot, and many soldiers of both armies drank, it is stated, amicably, during the truce, close to each other from the Portina stream.

The French held a council of war, in which Marshal Jourdan, the King's Chief of the Staff, advocated withdrawing to the Alberche and awaiting the result of Soult's operations on the Allied rear, arguing that if, at the first, a turning movement had been carried out, it might have succeeded, but that now the opportunity for it had almost certainly passed away. In this view subsequent events showed that Jourdan was right, for Sir Arthur, fearing for his left, had sent troops to the Sierra, and moved up his cavalry into the valley; so that when, in the afternoon, Joseph determined, acting on the advice of Victor, to make a final effort to turn as well as take the left, he again failed, though he repulsed the Allied cavalry, hampered by the ground.

At about 2 p.m. the attack was renewed with fury, against the left by Victor, and the centre by Sebastiani. At one time Sherbrooke's Division followed up the repulsed French columns too far, and, being driven back, pursued by Sebastiani's

July 27-28, 1809

troops, retired in disorder to the position. Mackenzie's Brigade (2/24th, 2/31st, and 1/45th), coming up, withstood Sebastiani's advance with extreme gallantry,* but to the left of this brigade the position was open, and was in great peril.

This was the crisis of the battle of Talavera; and what now happened illustrates, first, the quickness and decision of Sir Arthur Wellesley; second, the result of a well-timed counter-attack; and third, the effect which one steady disciplined regiment may have on the battle-field, and upon a whole campaign.

Perceiving, before they were repulsed, the danger which the rash ardour of the pursuing British regiments would bring upon them, Sir Arthur had ordered down to the left of Mackenzie's Brigade a regiment from the hill, though at some risk. The splendid steadiness of this corps (the 48th) saved the day.

"It seemed," writes Napier, "as if it must be carried away by the retiring crowds; but, wheeling back by companies, it let them pass through the intervals, and then resuming its proud and beautiful line struck against the right of the pursuing enemy, plying such a destructive musketry, and closing with such a firm countenance, that his forward movement was checked."

This counter-stroke on the flank of the momentarily victorious French was decisive of the battle, and made the British strongest at the critical and most important point. The attacks against the position were all repulsed, and the whole French

* See Oman, vol. i. p. 541.

army now retired, falling back across the Alberche the next day. Sir Arthur writes that he would have brought forward the Spaniards in the battle to attack the French columns on their left flank, but he dared not attempt it owing to their incapability of manœuvring. Could he have done so the effect would probably have been decisive. July 27-28, 1809

After the contest had ceased, the grass which covered much of the field of battle, having become very dry from the excessive heat, took fire accidentally, and the flames, spreading, cruelly scorched numbers of the wounded.

The losses were very heavy—Allies over 5,000,* French over 7,000; 17 guns were taken from the latter. The Allies did not pursue, the British being exhausted and in want of food, and the Spaniards, in Sir Arthur's opinion, not sufficiently in hand.

The results of the battle may be said to have been more moral than material. The British had fought in a half-starved condition, and were unable to pursue on account of fatigue and want of food, for in the contest the brunt of the fighting had fallen almost entirely on them; and with 22,000 they had practically met the attack of 45,000—*i.e.* of more than double their numbers.†

Here, as at Vimiera and Corunna, the line, from its superiority of fire, had overthrown the dense French columns.

* Generals Mackenzie and Langwerth, and the French General Lapisse, were among the killed, and very many Field Officers wounded on both sides.

† On the 29th the Light Division, under General Robert Craufurd, came up from Lisbon, which they had left on July 2nd (see pp. 128-9).

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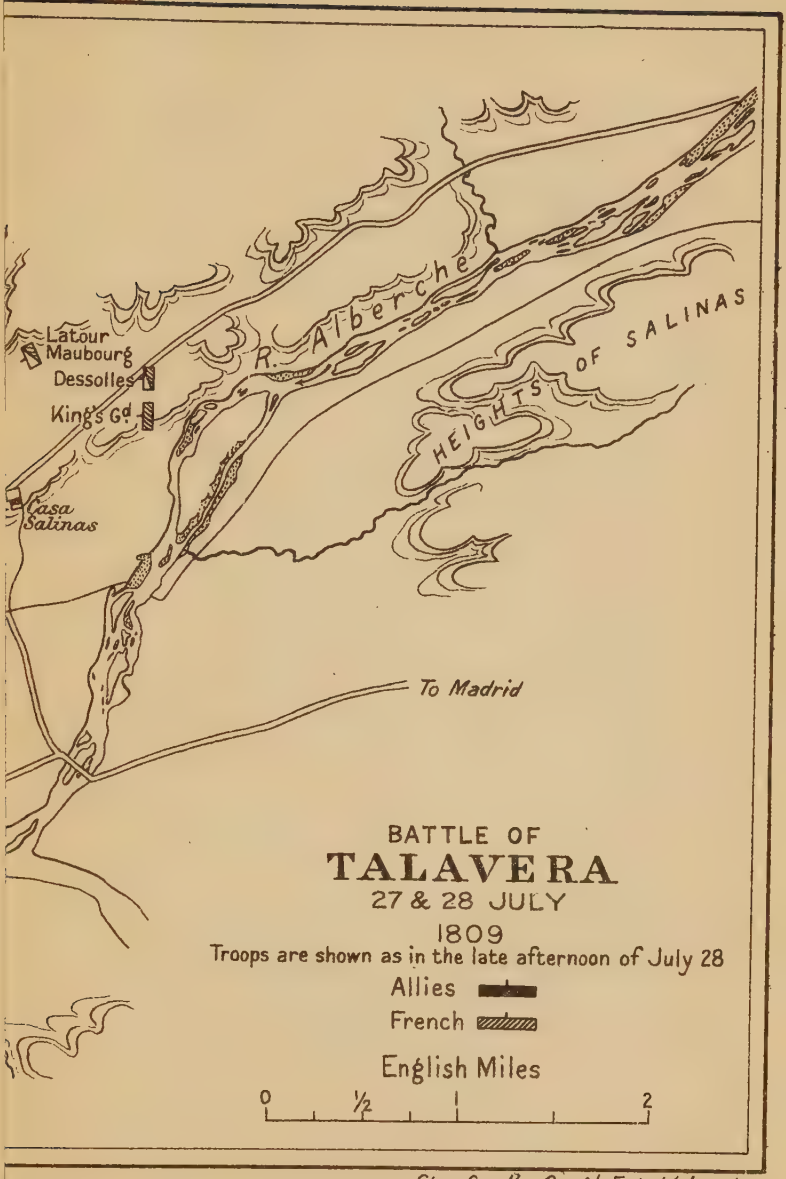
Napoleon's comments upon Joseph's plan of attack were: "When once you had resolved to deliver battle you should have done so with more unity and vigour"—in other words, that he should have massed more men opposite the one point he desired to carry, and pushed and supported the attack there more strenuously.

He did not use his "Reserve" at all, and with respect to this Napoleon says: "To be repulsed when one has 12,000 men in reserve who have not fired a shot, is to put up with an insult."

It would seem, certainly, that he should have made early in the battle a more decided and concentrated effort to force and turn the British left.

A "Reserve" is a force held back to be used at decisive points as occasion requires, and therefore, before an army is finally worsted, it should have been brought, at all events to some extent, into action. Sir Arthur Wellesley had scarcely any Reserve in the proper sense of the word in this battle, for his whole available British troops were not more than sufficient to occupy the front of the position, and the Spaniards he could not count upon with any confidence. This made his situation all the more difficult and critical, and the gallantry of the British infantry was so conspicuous at Talavera, that a French general (Jomini) bore testimony that it "proved that it could dispute the palm with the best in Europe."

The French, having now, from the experience of more than one contest, learnt the true quality of their enemy and its leader, never, it is said,



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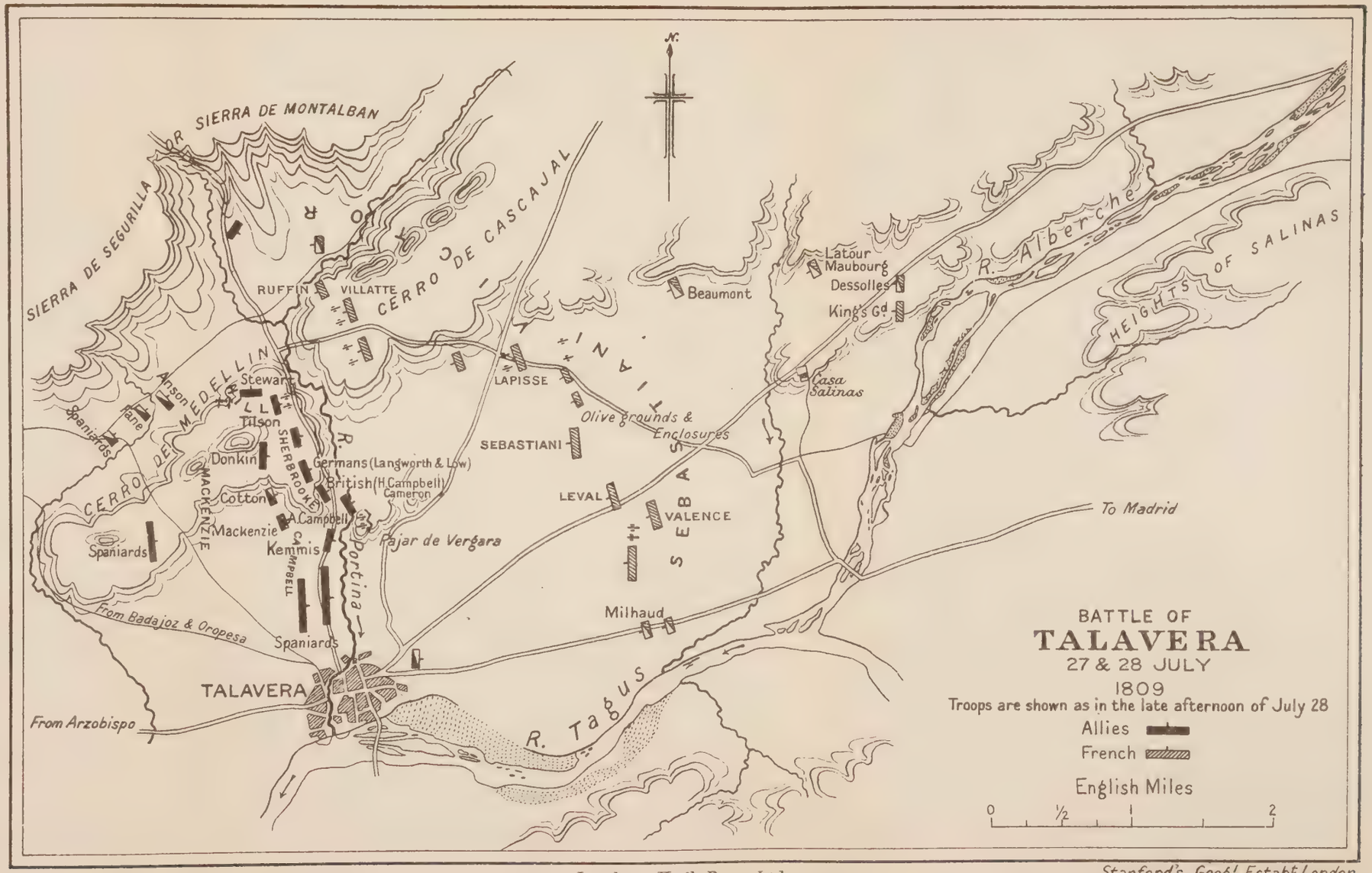

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afterwards approached the British with the confidence they had formerly felt. July, 1809

The battle was a defensive one, but its result was decided by an *offensive* attack at the critical moment. "Talavera" forms a bar to the Peninsular medal, and a battle-honour for regiments engaged. In this battle the 29th Regiment captured two standards.

At its conclusion Sir Arthur could obtain no assistance for his wounded; and becoming indignant, refused firmly to stir one step further in advance. Writing on July 31st he says: "It is positively a fact, that during the last seven days the British army have not received one-third of their provisions, and that at this moment there are nearly 4,000 wounded soldiers dying in hospital from want of common assistance and necessaries, which any other country in the world would have given, even to its enemies. I positively will not move—nay, more, I will disperse my army—till I am supplied with provisions and means of transport, as I ought to be."

Venegas had acted most irresolutely. Instead of being on the Tagus as desired, at or above Aranjuez by July 23rd—occupying Sebastiani, and (should the latter move towards Talavera) threatening Madrid—he allowed Sebastiani unmolested to join Joseph and Victor, reached Aranjuez July 29th, and then halted till August 5th.*

These instances alone show in sufficiently strong light the difficulties in connection with the Spanish

* It has been said that orders received from the Spanish Junta conflicted with those of Sir Arthur.

July to Aug. 1809

Government and commanders with which Sir Arthur Wellesley had to contend; and he soon had a still more decided proof of the untrustworthiness of his allies, and one which nearly cost him his army.

On August 2nd, 1809,* he became aware that the promise made by Cuesta to occupy the pass of Baños had not been fulfilled; that he had only sent there a handful of men; and that Soult, having *marched through the pass*, was *now at Plasencia in rear of the Allied army.*

This threatened danger caused Sir Arthur to face about; and, ignorant of the strength of Soult, he marched to attack him, leaving Cuesta behind at Talavera, with the understanding that, if he retreated, he was to provide transport and bring away the wounded.

One of the most serious junctures in which the British army was at any time placed in the Peninsula was now impending, for not only was Soult's corps at Plasencia, but the two others (Ney's and Mortier's), which had been placed under his command, and of the position of which Sir Arthur was ignorant, were fast concentrating with him in the valley of the Tagus.

To understand this new situation of affairs, so critical for the Allies, we must turn for a moment to the movements of the French under Soult.

When the Emperor had placed the two corps of Ney and Mortier under the command of Soult, he had told the latter to "concentrate"; and having

* Oman, in his *History of the War*, says August 3rd; Soult was, at all events, at Plasencia on August 1st.

(though at a distance in Austria) penetrated the probable movements of the Allies, had thus written: "Wellesley will most likely advance by the Tagus against Madrid; in that case pass the mountains, fall on his flank and rear, and crush him." July, 1809

Soult received this letter on June 30th, 1809;* at once ordered Ney and Mortier to join him; informing Joseph of his instructions. But the spirit of discord was now strong among the French commanders; Ney is said by some to have been unwilling to move, holding it imprudent to uncover Leon; he had in any case a long march before him; and Joseph, afraid of Venegas's corps to the south, called Mortier towards Madrid. Thus the concentration did not take place until after a great delay; and it was July 18th before the three corps —Soult, Ney, and Mortier, 50,000 strong—were in motion towards Salamanca. But, two days before the junction between Sir Arthur Wellesley and Cuesta at Oropesa (July 20th), these corps were on the march to unite; Soult had become aware of the Allies having passed through Plasencia, and his cavalry posts moved towards the pass of Baños.

On July 22nd Joseph was informed of this, and also of the presence of the Allies at Talavera. He ordered Soult to move upon Plasencia with speed; and calling in all his troops, except a very small force left at Toledo to watch Venegas, marched in person to assist Victor against Sir Arthur Wellesley.

* According to Napier; but Oman says July 2nd.

July-Aug. 1809

The result of his attack upon the Allied position at Talavera on July 27th and 28th, 1809, has been already mentioned; and from what we have said above, the advance of Soult with Ney and Mortier without difficulty through the pass of Baños, which Cuesta had failed to occupy as arranged, and his presence at Plasencia, is fully explained.

On August 3rd Sir Arthur Wellesley, who, as we have said, had faced about (and was now marching as he thought against the single corps of Soult), reached Oropesa; and on the evening of that day, while he was still unconscious of the dangers which surrounded him, he learnt from captured French despatches that the enemy under Soult were in far greater strength than he had supposed; and that that marshal had already reached Naval Moral, thus cutting him off from one of his lines of retreat across the Tagus—viz. that by the bridge of Almaraz. He also learnt that Joseph was again advancing, and that Cuesta had determined to fall back in haste from Talavera. Sir Arthur now saw that but two alternatives were left open to him,—viz. to retire across the Tagus by the bridge of Arzobispo, and so reach the road through Truxillo and Merida before the French intercepted him; or to stand his ground, and, with an army depressed in spirit by long abstinence, fight forces far superior to him in numbers, moving in combination against his front, his rear, and his line of retreat. The Spaniards were not to be depended upon, and Napier tells us that "the peril was now apparent to every soldier in the British ranks." Under these circumstances

Sir Arthur determined to fall back, and on August 4th, 1809, the army crossed the bridge of Arzobispo, and moved on Jaracejo by Deleytosa, detaching Craufurd's Division * to Almaraz, Cuesta following (August 5th). Aug. 4-20, 1809

On August 8th Wellesley was at Deleytosa, and also in the mountains between himself and Cuesta, whose rearguard held Arzobispo; Craufurd was entrenched at Almaraz; Soult with Mortier about to attack Cuesta at Arzobispo; Victor's infantry from Talavera closing on Mortier's right flank, south of the Tagus; and Ney at Almaraz, having been directed to pass the river there by a ford.

Soult, on the 8th, defeated Cuesta at Arzobispo, but Victor refused to move into the mountains, and Ney could find no ford near Almaraz.

Then Soult determined to enter Portugal by Coria, but Ney was much opposed to this, and Joseph at this juncture recalled Victor towards Madrid, in order to check Venegas † (at Aranjuez), and ordered Ney to Salamanca.

Until August 20th Wellesley held Jaracejo and Almaraz, when, becoming anxious as to supplies, he withdrew to Merida, and thence to Badajoz; while Beresford, by the Perales Pass and Coria, had already reached the river Elgá (August 17th).

Throughout the Allied movements, Sir Robert Wilson had acted with much energy, advancing

* Consisting of the 43rd, 52nd, and 95th Rifles, with, according to Napier, 6 guns, but, according to Oman, without guns.

† Venegas was, on August 11th, defeated and dispersed at Almonacid, near Toledo, by Sebastiani.

to Escalona, near Madrid, and getting back to Portugal afterwards by the pass of Baños, though with heavy loss.

On August 31st Cuesta's troops fell back from Deleytosa, behind the Guadiana.

This closed the main operations for the year. At Badajoz Wellington * heard of a Spanish defeat—suffered by the Duc del Parque at Alba de Tormes (November 26th)—which endangered Ciudad-Rodrigo, and towards the end of December, 1809, left Badajoz, and, marching northwards, quartered his troops on the banks of the Agueda, between Almeida and Ciudad-Rodrigo, commencing at the same time in secret to fortify the country around Lisbon, endeavouring to make his hold upon that corner of Portugal secure by the construction of the *Lines of Torres Vedras.*† Beresford fell back towards Thomar, with outposts on the frontier.

COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN

When Sir Arthur Wellesley, at the opening of this campaign, meditated his offensive movement into Spain, three plans were open to him.

1. To operate through Elvas and Badajoz, making these fortresses his base, join with Cuesta south of the Tagus, cross that river with him, and then move towards Madrid against Victor.

2. To operate through Almeida and Ciudad-

* Sir A. Wellesley had now been created Viscount Wellington (September 4th, 1809).

† See page 145, and plan facing page 148.

Rodrigo, making those fortresses his base, join with Beresford, and move by Salamanca against Soult.

3. To operate (as he did) through Plasencia, along the north bank of Tagus, join with Cuesta on that bank, and thus move against Victor.

The objections to the first plan were, that both armies would have to cross the Tagus after uniting; the bridges were few, and Victor might oppose their passage. Moreover, it would be necessary to leave strong detachments on the north bank to cover the roads to Lisbon; and the communication between Soult and Victor being open, Beresford's corps, isolated at Ciudad-Rodrigo, would be endangered.

The objections to the second plan were, that it would completely separate the British from Cuesta, and that, if the latter were attacked and defeated, an advance on Lisbon and Seville, and even the capture of those cities, could hardly be prevented.

The objections to the third plan were, that the junction of the British with Cuesta might be opposed by Victor, and rendered difficult. The line of march, also, along the northern bank of the Tagus, between the mountain spurs and the river, was confined and cramped; it also exposed the flank of the army to Soult, should he succeed in forcing the passes.

It was, as we have before mentioned, the fact that there were but two known passes, Perales and Baños, practicable for artillery, the belief that the Spaniards could and would hold these, and his false impressions as to the strength of Soult,

that influenced Sir Arthur to adopt the third plan as the best.

But it may be asked, What definite end did Sir Arthur propose to obtain in this campaign, since it was most probable that he could not long remain in, or near, Madrid, but must retire before the large forces which the French could, sooner or later, bring against him? The answer is, that he designed to aid the Spaniards by ejecting the French from their capital, even if it were only for a short period. Madrid was not a strong city. The French, covering it at various points upon the south, were but 50,000; while he, Cuesta, and Venegas, united, would be about 90,000. There was also a possibility of his being able to fall suddenly upon one corps of the French (Victor's), and inflict a defeat upon it. The capture of Madrid would have been a serious loss to the enemy, as it was the general depôt of all the French armies; and even the temporary expulsion of the French from the capital of Spain would be a blow to their prestige.

Looking back on the campaign, the belief that Sir Arthur's plans would have been successful, had they not been marred by the circumstances we have described, seems fully justified. The opportunity of falling upon Victor with superior forces in his position behind the Alberche did actually present itself, but to all Sir Arthur's entreaties for an attack Cuesta was deaf; Victor was reinforced by Joseph, and the favourable chance passed away.

Had Victor been overwhelmed, and had Venegas

co-operated energetically by Aranjuez, then Joseph would probably have retreated towards Madrid, and there is no reason to doubt that that city (which was weakly fortified, was by position badly adapted for defence, and which Napoleon had reduced in two days), would have fallen quickly to the Allies. Further, had Soult's strength been only that which Sir Arthur conceived it to be, and had Cuesta carried out his promises, there was every ground to suppose that the Spaniards would have been able to hold the mountain passes against the enemy, and prevent such a march as that which the French marshal was able to carry out.

The Spanish successes early in the war had possibly led Sir Arthur Wellesley to trust too much to what might be accomplished with Spanish aid, but he could scarcely have foreseen that Cuesta, in his folly or bad faith, would neglect the pass of Baños; or the extreme apathy of Venegas; or that a concentration and march, such as that of Soult with Ney and Mortier, could be effected without his knowledge and unopposed. That this concentration and this march *were* so effected must ever remain a fact difficult of satisfactory explanation, but it affords another lesson of the necessity for *incessant effort in obtaining information of the enemy's movements.*

Sir Arthur could scarcely credit the situation in which he found himself when he heard of Soult's strength and his position at Plasencia; and writing afterwards, he says: "*I did not think it possible* that three French corps, under three marshals, could have been assembled at Salamanca, without the

knowledge of the governor of Ciudad-Rodrigo, or of the Junta" (*i.e.* the Government) "of Castille, or that they could have penetrated into Estremadura without a shot being fired at them."

Speaking of Joseph's attack on the Allied position at Talavera, which brought on the battle at that point, Napier characterizes it as "a palpable, an enormous fault." Soult had clearly seen this, and had written to him in these words: "The most important results will be obtained, if your majesty will *abstain from attacking* until the moment when the knowledge of my march causes the enemy to retrace his steps." Joseph, however, allowed himself to be over-persuaded by Victor, and attacked.

The marching of some of the British troops from Lisbon to join in the battle of Talavera affords a good example of what can be done upon occasion by highly trained men. These men of the Light Division, under General Craufurd [43rd, 52nd, and 95th (now Rifle Brigade)], marched, leaving but 17 stragglers behind, under a scorching sun and with insufficient food, the great distance of 62 miles in 26 hours,* each soldier carrying over 50 pounds

* Napier and Alison say 62 English miles in 26 hours. Sir W. Cope, in his *History of the Rifle Brigade*, says upwards of 50 miles in 25 hours. Oman, who visited this part of Spain, says 43 miles in 22 hours. These discrepancies, though, do not affect the fact that the march was one of the most extraordinary on record, and it is to be borne in mind that the Division had marched some distance the day before it started on this last effort, moved *beyond* the actual position at Talavera, and then took up the outposts, which may account to some extent for the various estimates of distance and time.

in weight, and after some previous days' hard marching. Though they arrived too late to join in the fight, they took the outpost duty immediately after reaching the battle-field. What they accomplished proved the value of the ceaseless attention Craufurd paid to the details of marching in his division, as to which his orders were severely stringent.

The anxiety and disappointment which, in this campaign, the want of food and transport caused to Sir Arthur Wellesley, show the vital importance of these matters even more strongly than did the delays and long-drawn-out columns in that of Sir John Moore.

As he was unable in a friendly country to take food by force, and could not get it by other means, he was compelled to abandon Spain and retire into Portugal. His army, though it fought bravely in a half-fed condition at Talavera, at length fell into a very bad state. He himself, writing shortly after that battle, says: "The soldiers lose their discipline and their spirit; they plunder even in the presence of their officers. The officers are discontented, and are almost as bad as the men; and with an army which a fortnight ago beat double their numbers, I should now hesitate to meet a French corps of half their strength."

One great cause why the French and Allied armies in this campaign both failed to achieve any result commensurate with the number of soldiers in the field was, that both were under a "divided command." Frequent changes of the head of an

army, as in the campaign of 1808, or having more than one head, as in this campaign, are alike evils. In this case Sir Arthur Wellesley could not manage his independent ally Cuesta; Joseph could not manage his semi-independent marshals; and the marshals would not work in entire unison with one another, or with Joseph. Alluding to this jealous feeling and want of concord among the French marshals, Captain Lewis Butler, in *Wellington's Operations in the Peninsula*, writes, "Again and again, during the Peninsular War, we find the same forces actively at work, nullifying the Emperor's combinations however carefully thought out, however scientifically planned."

Powerful alliances may, for political reasons especially, render a divided command an advantage upon the whole; but at the same time, in such a command, there is an inherent weakness.

This campaign furnishes a marked instance of the failure of a double line of operations.

Napier remarks, that experience proves, that without extraordinary good fortune some accident will happen to mar the combinations of armies operating by more than one line. Both armies in this campaign were advancing by a "double line." Joseph was attempting to combine with Soult; Wellesley and Cuesta (united) were attempting to combine with Venegas: and both the combinations in reality failed.

In operations of this kind, the divided portions of an army often find great difficulty in obtaining intelligence of each other's movements. Still, we

shall see, in other campaigns in this war, instances, of successful operations by more than one line. The Prussians operated successfully by more than one in the war with Austria in 1866, and in the war with France in 1870. In the recent war in South Africa we were operating by two lines—viz. from Cape Town, and from Durban, in Natal. Success depends largely upon the perfection of the preparations beforehand, the extent to which communication can be kept up (which the telegraph now facilitates), and the cordial and determined co-operation of all concerned.

The influence of the topography of the country upon this Campaign is even more striking in the second period of it than in the first.

The operations turned largely upon the fact that, as Wellesley advanced up the Tagus, the mountain chain of the Guadarama lay upon his left flank, and that over this but two passes practicable for an army with artillery—Baños and Perales—existed. Everything depended upon whether the Allies or the French had control of those passes, and upon whether the approach towards them by the French in force was immediately reported to Wellesley or not.

Again, the character of the Tagus, and nature and position of the passages over it, materially affected the operations. When Wellesley was, on August 3rd, at Oropesa, and Soult at Naval Moral, on the road to the bridge at Almaraz, it was then necessary for Wellesley to secure his retreat at once, by passing the river at Arzobispo (see page 122).

"We were in a bad scrape," he writes, "and I really believe if I had not determined to retire at the moment I did, all retreat would have been cut off."

Lastly, when, having crossed at Arzobispo, he held the mountain road between it and Deleytosa, Craufurd being at Almaraz, he was then in a comparatively safe position, for he writes:—

"The possession of the bridge at Almaraz, and of the mountains between that point and the bridge of Arzobispo, protects the country behind the Tagus from Toledo nearly to Abrantes, as the enemy cannot penetrate with cannon at any point between Almaraz and Toledo, and the passage of the river is nearly impracticable for an army between Almaraz and Abrantes."

There were indifferent fords over the Tagus, hard to find, near both Arzobispo and Almaraz, and the Allies with difficulty dragged guns from Arzobispo to Deleytosa; but Wellesley's meaning probably is that the country south of the Tagus, between Almaraz and Toledo, is so impracticable that no French army, with cannon and baggage, would hope or attempt to penetrate by that route against another occupying Arzobispo, Almaraz, and the mountains between. It is to be remarked that Victor, who crossed the Tagus from Talavera in August (see page 123), had apparently infantry only with him; while Craufurd, moving to Almaraz, is stated by Oman to have been unhampered by guns. (See Note to page 123, and also Oman, vol. ii. pp. 579, 586-8, 592-4.)

It would be hardly possible to illustrate more completely that there can be no true comprehension of, or just criticism on, the military operations in any country, without a full knowledge of that country's topography.

The following extract from a letter of Sir Arthur Wellesley to Lord Castlereagh, written after he had retreated to Jaracejo, gives in very few words his opinion of the conduct of the Spaniards. "I have but little to add," he says, "to my public despatch of this date, which I hope will justify me from all blame in the eyes of his Majesty's Ministers, excepting that of having *trusted the Spanish general in anything*."

For the victory of Talavera Sir Arthur Wellesley was created Baron Douro and Viscount Wellington; and for the campaign he was also made Captain-General by Spain and Marshal-General by Portugal.

CHAPTER VII

CAMPAIGN IN PORTUGAL, 1810

MASSENA INVADES PORTUGAL—BUSACO—THE LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS

The experience gained in the Talavera campaign convinced Lord Wellington that but little assistance in freeing the Peninsula was to be obtained from the Spaniards. It became more evident to him day by day, that any success against the masses of the French must be a gradual one, and that he might possibly be driven, as Sir John Moore had been, to fall back towards the sea—his base.

His efforts were now directed to the raising and organizing of a larger force of Portuguese, to placing provisions and garrisons in fortified posts at Abrantes, Setuval, Peniché, etc., as well as in the frontier fortresses of Almeida and Elvas; and, above all, to the strengthening of the lines of Torres Vedras, covering Lisbon.

Cadiz and Gibraltar were the only points out of Portugal now held by the British.

To the few who knew of the existence of the fortifications about Torres Vedras—which we

shall briefly describe further on *—they appeared to have been designed to protect Lisbon from a *coup de main*, and nothing more; but by Wellington himself they had always been regarded as the barrier beyond which the French could and should never advance. Events soon proved the correctness of his judgment; and his reputation was raised, by the selection and construction of these lines, to an unquestioned eminence. Aug 1809 to June 1810

Napoleon, having avenged Aspern by the brilliant victory of Wagram (July 6th, 1809), and humbled Austria in this battle, again turned his attention to the Peninsula, increasing his armies destined to be quartered in Spain to the very large total of 366,000 men. From the time of Wellington's retreat into Portugal after Talavera in 1809 until June, 1810, no very important operations went on against the British troops, but events were rapidly preparing the way for them.

In January, 1810, Marshal Soult had collected a large force—about 70,000—near the passes of the Sierra Morena mountains, forced them, and subdued Seville with all the chief cities of Andalusia—excepting Cadiz, which place he besieged.

Napoleon in the meantime was assembling a large army for the invasion of Portugal from the direction of Salamanca, to be placed under the command of Massena, one of his most celebrated marshals, called, from his success in Germany and elsewhere, the "spoiled child of victory," and the French were actively engaged in subduing the various Spanish provinces, with such success that

* See pages 145-6, and plan facing page 143.

June 1810 by June, 1810, they were masters of three-fourths of the kingdom.

This month of June, 1810, may be regarded as a most critical epoch in the affairs in the Peninsula. The British people had begun to despair of success, and a strong party in Parliament clamoured for the withdrawal of the British troops, so that the least serious reverse would have entailed their recall. It was, in fact, owing chiefly to the firmness and representations of Wellington himself, influencing the Government in England, that the struggle was still continued.

The positions of the contending armies were at this time :—

THE FRENCH

The *Army of the South*, under Soult, composed of the corps of Victor, Mortier, and Sebastiani, about 60,000; in Andalusia.

The *Army of the Centre*, under Joseph, about 24,000; around Madrid.

The *Army of Portugal*, under Massena, composed of the corps of Ney, Reynier, and Junot, and the reserve cavalry of Montbrun, about 80,000. This army could be reinforced by other troops, which were extended from Salamanca to the French frontier. Ney, Junot, and Montbrun's cavalry were at Salamanca; Reynier in the valley of the Tagus, near Alcantara.

The remainder of the 366,000 men were spread over the various provinces.

Soult had been appointed by Napoleon Major-General of the armies in Spain under Joseph,* as

* Equivalent to the appointment of Chief of the Staff.

well as Commander of the Army of the South, and was, in reality, almost independent of Joseph. June 1810

THE ALLIES

To meet the invasion of Portugal which was threatening from various quarters, it was necessary that the Allies, nearly 95,000, should be somewhat widely distributed, and Wellington had posted them thus:—

The bulk of the British army, under his own immediate command, at Viseu, Celorico, Guarda, and Pinhel—headquarters being at Celorico; the cavalry along the valley of the Mondego, and some at Belmonte; and 4,000 men of the Light Division under Craufurd pushed out between the Rivers Coa and Agueda, watching Ciudad-Rodrigo. The strength in all nearly 25,000 men.

The remainder of the British (about 5,000), and some Portuguese, under Hill (about 5,000), at Abrantes and Portalegre, on the road towards Badajoz.

The bulk of the Portuguese regular troops, paid by England and commanded by British officers, at Thomar, as a reserve, and in the fortresses of Almeida, Elvas, &c.—nearly 30,000.

The Portuguese militia—21 regiments—to the North of the Douro; a somewhat greater number under command of Beresford at Setuval, at different points of the Alemtejo, and thrown out behind the Elga and the Ponsul,—nearly 30,000.

In order to secure supplies, depôts were established along the rivers,—viz. at Abrantes and near

June-July 1810

Lisbon, on the Tagus; at Figueras and Pena Cova, on the Mondego; and at Oporto and Lamego on the Douro. Magazines of consumption were placed at Viseu, Celorico, Condeixa, Leirya, Thomar, and Almeida. Flying bridges were constructed on the Tagus and Zezere, near Abrantes; and also over the Tagus at Vilha Velha. Roads were improved in the interior of Portugal, as far as possible, in order to assist the Allied communication; for instance, the road from Abrantes by Thomar and Espinhal to the Mondego (connecting Hill, by a short route, with Wellington); and that on the left bank of the Tagus from Abrantes, by Vilha Velha, to Castel-Branco (connecting Hill with the advanced Portuguese militia on the Ponsul). A chain of posts by Guarda, Espinhal and Thomar to Abrantes was also established to secure the communication between Hill and Wellington.

Certain roads leading towards the Allied posts, such, for instance, as that from Castel-Branco over the mountains to Abrantes (by Sobriera Formosa), and that leading from Sabugal, by Belmonte, and along the Zezere to Thomar, were made more difficult to the enemy by breaking them up.

Signal telegraphs, of which a naval officer was in charge, were established from Lisbon to Abrantes and Almeida.

These preparations for defence should be carefully noticed.

In this position Wellington awaited the unfolding of the French plans, working all the time at

the lines of Torres Vedras, Craufurd being instructed, on the approach of the French in any strength, to retire behind the Coa, and not to risk a serious action on the right bank. June-July 1810

Napoleon's plan of campaign was for Massena to invade Portugal from Salamanca, while Soult advanced on Badajoz and Elvas. The invasion of Massena was to be the real serious effort to drive the Allies back; but Soult also, after taking Badajoz and Elvas, was to endeavour to reach Lisbon from that direction.*

Early in June, 1810, Massena commenced his operations by sending Ney across the Agueda to invest Ciudad-Rodrigo, while the corps of Reynier was kept in motion in order to perplex Wellington.

Craufurd fell back towards the Coa before Ney's force, which was six times stronger than his own, and Wellington, knowing that he would be powerless to prevent Ciudad-Rodrigo falling in the end, made no effort to relieve it. The place surrendered to the French on July 10th, 1810.

After the fall of this fortress Ney advanced, threatening Almeida; and Craufurd, anxious to delay its fall, remained on the right bank of the Coa dangerously long, in opposition (in spirit at all events) to the directions he had received from Wellington. The result was that he was almost surrounded by the larger force of Ney, and obliged to draw off his troops hastily over the Coa on

* From the Almada heights, opposite Lisbon to the south, the passage up the Tagus to Lisbon harbour is commanded. But Soult's troops did not succeed in reaching Lisbon (see page 147).

July 24 to Sept. 16, 1810

July 24th, 1810, by one narrow bridge, suffering serious loss and very nearly losing his entire force, which was composed of the pick of the British Light Division. Sir Harry Smith writes as to this: "During the Peninsular War there was never a more severe contest. The 43rd lost 17 officers and 150 men. The 95th (Rifles) 10 officers and 140 men. The bridge was literally piled with the dead, and they made breastworks of the bodies." —*Autobiography of Sir Harry Smith*, edited by G. C. Moore-Smith, M.A., 1902.

Wellington now withdrew all his own troops to the left bank of the Mondego, except one division posted at Guarda to keep open the communication with Hill and watch the road from Almeida, while the militia in the north harassed Massena's rear, and captured Senabria.

Until August 15th Massena made no further decided movements, being anxious to hear what Soult was accomplishing in the south before he entered further into the campaign.

He then (August 15th, 1810) invested Almeida with Ney's corps, and the place capitulated on the 27th.

Both the frontier fortresses of Ciudad-Rodrigo and Almeida were now in Massena's hands, and Reynier having been brought up to join him, he moved forward. On September 16th he had concentrated his troops thus (see Map IV., facing page 178):—

Junot, with the artillery and cavalry, at Pinhel.
Ney at Macal.
Reynier at Guarda.

From these points he put his three corps in motion for Viseu. Sept. 1810

Massena's main body entered Viseu September 21st, 1810, but the artillery was in rear, and did not arrive till the 23rd.

Wellington had fallen back before the French advance, by the *left* bank of the Mondego, directing Hill to join him as soon as he was certain that Reynier had moved northwards; and also ordering up some British and Portuguese troops who were at Thomar under General Leith.

Proclamations had some time before been issued to the inhabitants of Portugal by the Portuguese Government, at the instance of Lord Wellington, directing them, upon the French approach, to lay waste their fields, break down their bridges and mills, destroy their crops, and retire within the lines of Torres Vedras. It was hoped that by this means the country would be turned into an inhospitable desert for the French, affording no sustenance for man or beast.

Massena, having received his artillery, advanced along the right bank of the Mondego by Martagoa towards Coimbra, and Wellington, having observed his line of march, fell back along the left bank behind the River Alva.

The road by which Massena was moving approaches, at a few leagues north of Coimbra, the Sierra of Busaco. This sierra rises to some 250 feet above the surrounding slopes, which overhang the right bank of the Mondego.

At Martagoa, close to the River Criz, one of the affluents of the Mondego, the road branches

Sept. 25–26, 1810

off into five other roads, by each of which Coimbra could be reached. Of these, three afford practicable routes over the Sierra of Busaco; a fourth, a poor road, leads over the mountains by the Boyalva Pass to Sardao, and thence to Coimbra; the fifth turns the sierra by the right, through Pena Cova, close under the Sierra of Busaco.

It was determined by Wellington to endeavour to bar Massena's path at the Sierra of Busaco, in order to raise the spirits of his own soldiers and of the people of Portugal, and also to gain time to withdraw his magazines from Coimbra and Condeixa, and aid the Portuguese peasantry in carrying out the destruction of the crops. This sierra offered an excellent position, and Hill and also Leith (from Thomar) having now arrived, Wellington, on September 26th, 1810, drew up the army upon it, with the exception of a few troops and the cavalry, who were on the Sardao-Coimbra road. He also directed some Portuguese militia to move from Lamego upon Sardao and the Boyalva Pass, to prevent his being turned by that road. The one from Pena Cova was commanded by the Allied guns on the Sierra Busaco.

Ney, leading the French advance, drove in the Allied pickets on September 25th*; but Massena, who was in rear, would not sanction an attack till he leisurely came up himself at 2 p.m. on the 26th, when he ordered it for dawn on the 27th.

* Napier says at 3 p.m., when Wellington had only 25,000 men in line; Oman at 5 p.m., when he had nearly 40,000 in line, and it was too late to attack that evening (Lecture on battle of Busaco in *Journal of the Royal Artillery*, March, 1907).

BATTLE OF BUSACO
September 27th, 1810
(See plan facing page 144)

Sept. 27, 1810

In this battle the Allies numbered over 50,000, the French over 60,000.

The Sierra of Busaco afforded a strong position, most difficult to carry even with a very superior force. The communication in rear was excellent, and in front of the position the country was intersected by watercourses and deep ravines.* The Allied right (Hill) was above Pena Cova, with Portuguese beyond the Mondego; the left (Cole) near the Sierra Caramula. Between these stretched the divisions of Leith, Picton, Spencer, and Craufurd, with some Portuguese and Germans, Spencer being south of the Convent of Busaco; Craufurd north of it (somewhat advanced); and the cavalry near Milheada, with the exception of the 4th Dragoons posted behind the centre. Over 50 guns were on the ridge.

The French attacked with three divisions under Ney, and two under Reynier (some 40,000), Junot being in reserve. Ney was to move when Reynier had crowned the ridge; and all, after piercing the British centre, were to converge upon the convent.†

The columns ascended the heights with determined bravery, sustaining very heavy loss from the artillery and musketry fire of the defenders. The French guns, from the nature of the ground, were of little use. At one time Reynier's troops actually

* See plan (and note upon it) facing page 144.

† Massena's (unpublished) orders (Oman upon the battle of Busaco, *Journal of the Royal Artillery*, March, 1907).

Sept. 27-28, 1810

reached the summit of the ridge, but they were shortly afterwards repulsed and driven down the slope, while more to the Allied left a decisive charge of 1,800 British bayonets, ordered by Craufurd at the moment the French neared the crest, put an end to all the attempts on that part of the position.

This battle was, in short, a hand-to-hand fight in which great bravery was shown on both sides, and in it, as in other battles which we have already described, the superiority of the line over the column, when the line is composed of determined and cool troops, was once more illustrated.

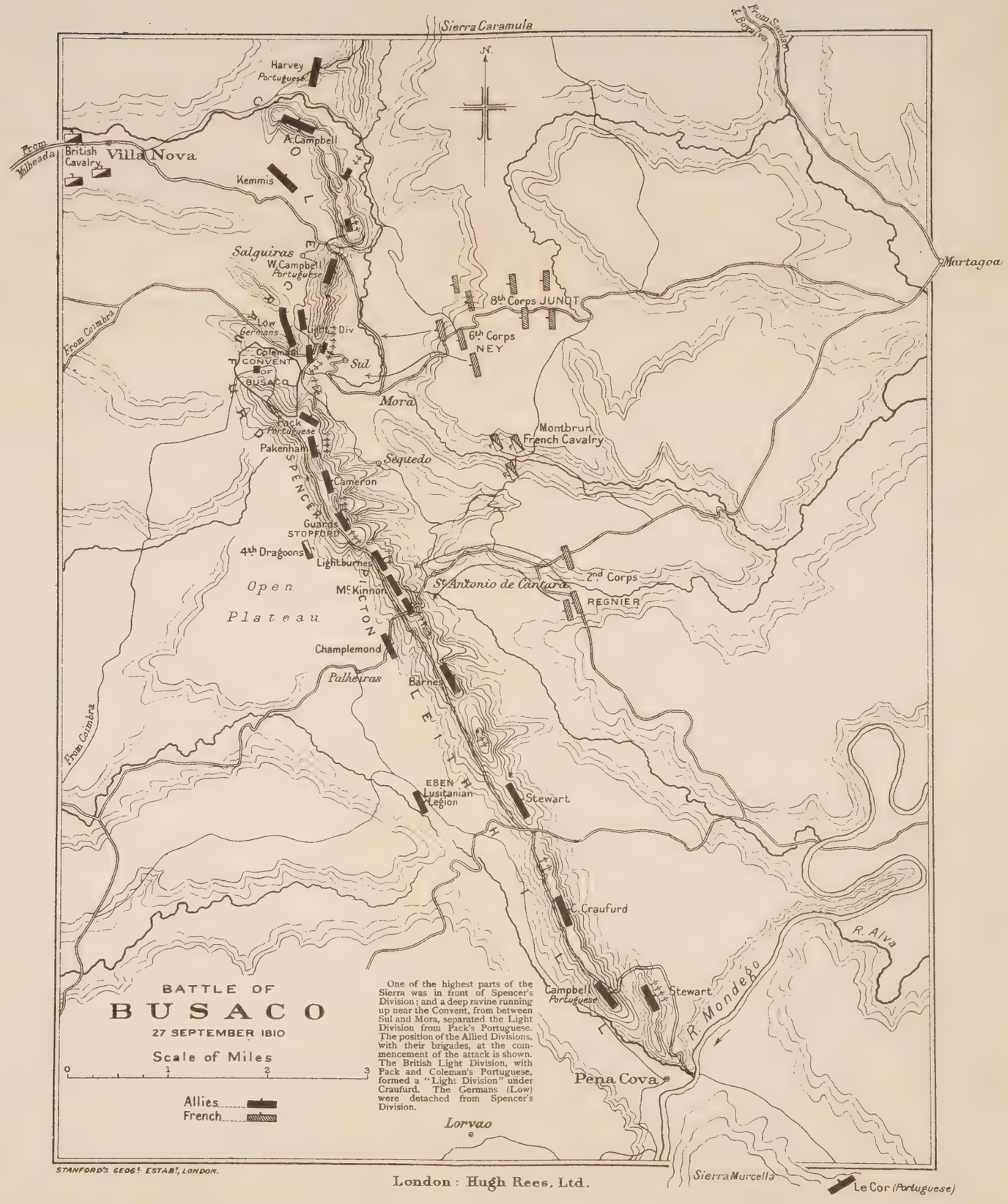
The Allied loss was about 1,300; the French nearly 5,000.

"Busaco," as a bar to the Peninsular medal and a battle-honour, commemorates the day.

The reasons why Sir Arthur Wellesley made this stand at Busaco are more fully explained further on in his own words.

The effect of it was to dispel the despondent feeling which had been caused both in England and in the Peninsula by the retreat towards the lines of Torres Vedras in the previous year; it gave the Portuguese also confidence in themselves, and increased their trust in Sir Arthur Wellesley as a leader.

The day following the battle, September 28th, Massena discovered the road by the Boyalva Pass and Sardao, which passed round the left of this Allied position, and in the night made towards the pass, and finding it unoccupied, got through it. By a mistake, the Portuguese who were to hold it had



STANFORD'S GEOG.L ESTAB.T, LONDON.

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taken a too circuitous route viâ Oporto, and so did not forestall the French. Thus Massena had gained the Oporto-Coimbra road, and so secured the advantage of being able to turn Wellington's position on the Busaco heights. Oct. 10, 1810

Wellington then abandoned the heights, and retired by Coimbra, Pombal, and Leirya to the lines of Torres Vedras. Massena followed, sacking Coimbra and forcing occasional rearguard actions upon the Allies; and found himself on October 10th, 1810, face to face with the works of Torres Vedras (see plan facing page 148 *), he having up to that time never even heard of their existence.

He now saw a barrier in his path which struck him with such astonishment that he retired, and did not come forward again for two days, when he cautiously reconnoitred the Allied position. The lines of Torres Vedras consisted of three great lines of defence. To form the first or outer one, a tract of country, thirty miles in length, extending from Alhandra on the Tagus, where gunboats aided in the defence, across by Torres Vedras to the sea, had been fortified with numerous redoubts and bristled with guns. This country, by nature most formidably strong, had been made stronger by scarping the mountains, damming up the rivers, forming inundations, and breaking up roads; inside this barrier, eight miles in rear, was a second, stronger, line; and behind this, around Lisbon, an intrenched camp: the defences in all consisting of some 150 redoubts, on which were mounted 600 cannon.

* To understand these works in detail, large scale plans must be consulted; but that opposite page 148 shows their general character.

Oct. to Nov. 1810

It indicates the scale of these works to mention that 10,000 peasants, relieved weekly, had been employed upon them for a long time. Across the lines led the only roads by which the French could approach Lisbon. Five practicable for artillery crossed the first line, and four the second line, and these were defended by every kind of obstacle. Signal posts had been established on the principal heights, and the nature of the country was such that while, behind the lines, communication from one end to the other was easy for the defenders, a ridge of mountains to the north (the Baragueda) divided an army facing the right and left extremities of the lines by a formidable natural obstacle.

The position of Massena was now as gloomy as it had before seemed hopeful. For one month, extended along the front of the lines, he sought in vain to find a practicable entrance; and during it the Portuguese militia and peasantry closed upon his rear, destroyed his magazines, and forced him to seek for sustenance by dispersing his army over the half-deserted country. During this time he sent a messenger (General Foy) to Paris, imploring Napoleon to order reinforcements to his succour, and in November made an effort to pass across the Tagus; but Hill watched the river so closely that he found it impossible. He then withdrew to Santarem, Alcanhete, Thomar, and Punhete.

It is due to those able officers of Engineers who, under Wellington's general instructions, planned, traced and supervised the famous lines of Torres Vedras which thus foiled Massena,

to say that chief among them was Colonel John (afterwards Sir John) Jones, who subsequently wrote the first history of this war in Spain, (in 1814); and Lieutenant-Colonel (afterwards Sir Richard) Fletcher, who was subsequently killed at the assault of St. Sebastian. Wellington now took up a position at Cartaxo, Alcoentre, and along the Rio Mayor, leaving a small force in the lines, and the two armies remained in presence four months (which takes us into the year 1811), the policy of Wellington, who was well supplied himself from Lisbon and the sea, being not to lose his own men in any engagement, but to reduce his enemy by famine. Nov.-Dec. 1810

During these operations the corps of Mortier, sent by Soult towards Badajoz (see page 139), and watched by Hill's force, had succeeded in doing little of importance, and never reached Lisbon. The French, however, had taken several more of the Spanish strongholds, including Tortosa.

COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN

The position taken up by the Allied army in Portugal, in order to await the French invasion, has been so fully described in the preceding pages, and the different roads, etc., by which the armies operated put down with so much detail, because an examination into this campaign in these particulars is both interesting and instructive.

The French could have invaded Portugal by several different lines:—

1. From the north, crossing the River Douro, as Soult had attempted in 1809.

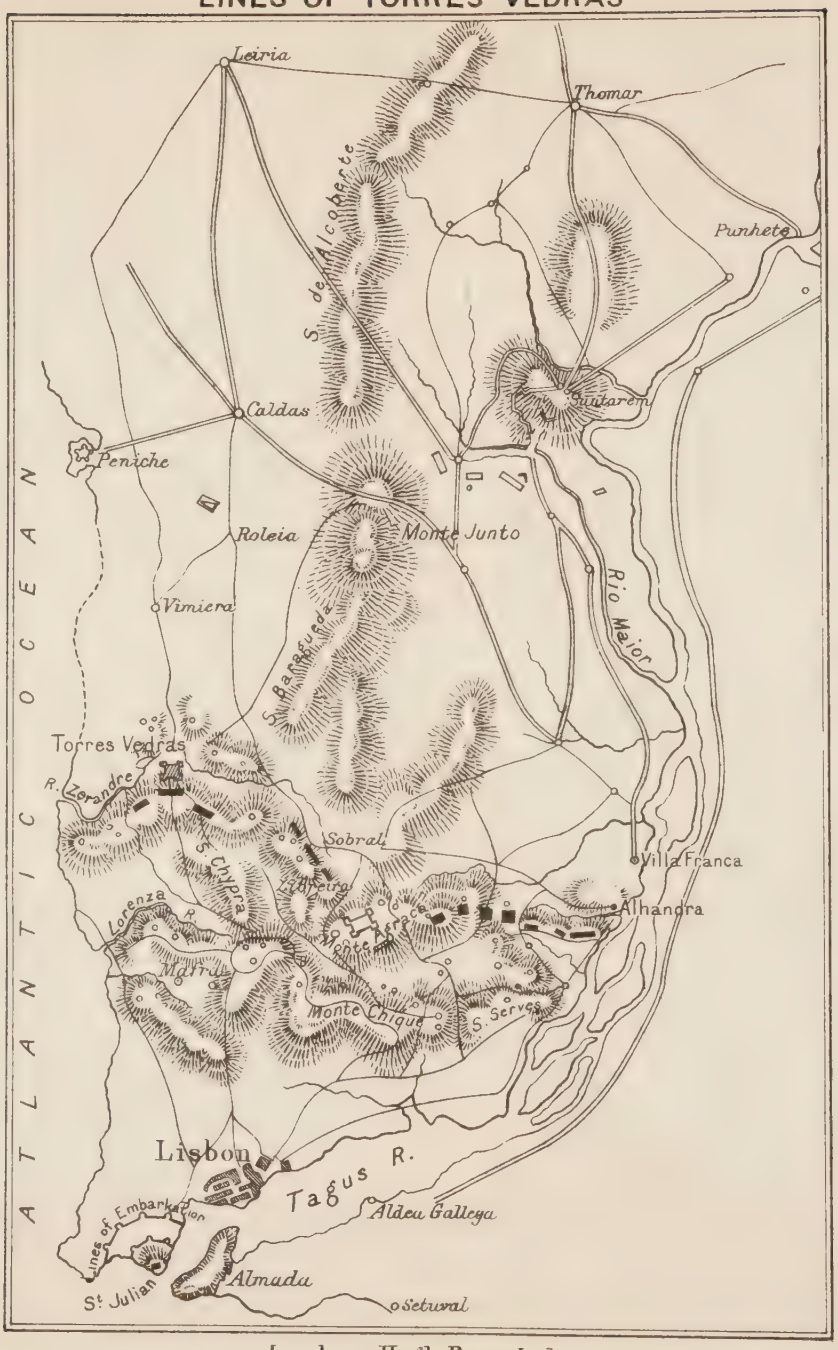
2. From some point between the Douro and the Tagus rivers, either from Ciudad-Rodrigo on the northern, or from Coria on the southern, side of the chain of the Sierra Guadarama.
3. From the south of the River Tagus, between it and the Guadiana (*e.g.* from Badajoz).

The greatest danger was to be apprehended from the directions of Ciudad-Rodrigo in the north, and Badajoz in the south; both because it would be an object to the French to gain these fortresses, and because the roads past them were the best for an invading army. *All points,* however, had to be watched, and were so.

The dispositions of Wellington were such, that while a portion of the Portuguese militia observed the first of the above lines, he himself, stretching from Viseu to Guarda and Belmonte, and with Beresford's Portuguese militia about the Elga and Ponsul, observed the second; and Hill, about Abrantes and Portalegre, the third.

The reserves occupied a central position at Thomar, and the arrangements as to bridges, roads, chains of posts, etc., mentioned as having been made to increase the facility of the Allied communications and impede the movements of the French, left nothing undone which, under the circumstances, was possible to ensure security from surprise and hamper the enemy. Wellington had an *interior* position with regard to the French, and in two marches could count on concentrating over 35,000 men, not including men in garrison, etc., towards Almeida; or at Guarda (by uniting

LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS



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his own troops with the militia north of the river, or the Portuguese from Thomar); and about 30,000 towards Badajoz (by uniting Hill's force with the militia in that neighbourhood, and towards the Elga and Ponsul; and as the line of invasion became pronounced, the troops from Thomar and reinforcements from England could be ordered up.

Hill and the militia along the Ponsul had a very responsible duty to perform in guarding the line of the Tagus, for it can be seen that *if* the French could force their way past them before Wellington could come from the north, they could interpose between the latter and Lisbon.

Of the different lines of invasion above alluded to as open to the French, the first had been tried by Soult, who had found it difficult and failed. The third was now about to be tried by Soult in aid of Massena's movements. Massena's choice therefore almost necessarily narrowed itself to the second, and to a selection between the lines to the north and south of the chain of the Guadarama. To have advanced by both of these would have needlessly weakened his strength.

That to the north was the nearer to his position at Salamanca, and the most direct. To operate by the southern he must cross the Guadarama chain by the passes of Baños or Perales, exposing the flank and rear of his line of march to annoyance from the Allies. The roads also to the south of the mountains were known from the experience of Junot to be very bad. Weighed against these disadvantages was the fact that an advance from

this direction (*e.g.* from Coria) would have enabled communication to be kept up with Joseph at Madrid, and with Soult, by Almaraz and Alcantara. Still, a consideration of all the drawbacks to the southern line fully accounts for Massena's adoption of that through Ciudad-Rodrigo and Almeida.

But after Massena, following this line, had secured the strongholds of Ciudad-Rodrigo and Almeida, and driven in the Allies from their vicinity, he had again the opportunity of choosing, from out of some three or four directions, the best one for his advance.

The existence of the long mountain ridges in continuation of the Sierra Estrella, stretching from Guarda towards Lisbon, and over which the roads were few, bad, and easily defended, almost forced an army approaching the Portuguese capital from the direction of Almeida to select which side of the ridge it will move by, and then adhere to it.

Massena might have tried to force the Sierra Estrella near Guarda, and advance down the Zezere Valley; but the road was broken up and carefully watched, and the Allied position strong.

He might have advanced down the left bank of the Mondego, but the road passed over mountains, and was described to Massena by some Portuguese of position as being a far worse one than it in reality was, although Napier implies that he would really have done more wisely to have taken that road.

He therefore determined to move by the right bank of the Mondego, through Viseu and Coimbra.

When Massena first arrived in front of the Allied position at Busaco, he might then have turned it as he did subsequently on the 28th, and without any greater risk of loss to his army: but he was unaware of the existence of a practicable road over the mountains at this point until after the battle of Busaco, when the unfortunate nature of his position made him search carefully for any outlet from it.

To gain information regarding all the roads and paths in an enemy's country is impossible without much exertion and running great danger; but sometimes hardly any sacrifice is too great to make in order to procure it.

Wellington has been criticised for having fought the battle of Busaco and lost men, when he meant eventually to retreat within the lines. What he himself says on this point is interesting:—

"I should have been inexcusable if, knowing what I did, I had not endeavoured to stop the enemy there*; and I should have stopped him entirely if it had not been for the blunders of the Portuguese general commanding in the north, who was prevented by a small French patrol from sending Trant by the road by which he was ordered to march. If he had come by that road—*i.e.* by Sardao and the Boyalva Pass—the French could not have turned our position, and they must have

* To the Right Hon. W. W. Pole, October 4th, 1810.

Oman, who three times walked over the battlefield, writes of the position as "a splendid one," favourable to the Allied artillery and infantry; and such as in itself justified the determination to give battle upon it (*Journal of the Royal Artillery*, March, 1907).

attacked us again ; they could not have carried it, and they must have retired. That which has since happened shows that, if not turned, I could have maintained it without loss of importance, and that, if turned, I could retire from it without inconvenience. It has likewise removed an impression which began to be very general, that we intended to fight no more, but to retire to our ships ; and it has given the Portuguese troops a taste for an amusement to which they were not before accustomed, and which they would not have acquired if I had not put them in a very strong position."

The political as well as the military situation made it, in fact, of importance to give battle at this time if a favourable opportunity offered. The battle of Busaco, writes Napier, " was forced upon him [Wellington] by events, and was in fine a political battle." He adds, too, that the changes in Government policy in England which might have followed upon any reverse made Wellington determine to fight no more than was necessary, otherwise he might have attacked Massena after he turned towards the Boyalva Pass ; but at this time "the loss of a single brigade might have caused the English Government to abandon the contest altogether."

Probably therefore considerations, which no leader can wisely ignore, would have led him to avoid a second battle, even could he have felt that he was attacking to great advantage ; but his despatches show that, from uncertainty as to Massena's real intentions, he could not feel this.

He writes that, late on the 28th, he saw French troops moving to their rear, and passing the hills between the Sierra and Martagoa. He was doubtful, however, of their object and of the direction they might take later on—whether to right or left; he believed that Sardao would be held by the Portuguese; and darkness was approaching.

So, during that night, in order to be closer to the Oporto-Coimbra road, he determined to move down from the Sierra. By the morning of the 29th he had abandoned it, and gone himself to Fornos, whence he writes to Hill, "We do not know which way they have turned," and tells him to watch his right.

Thus, while still uncertain, for the reasons explained, of Massena's position, he had withdrawn from the Sierra. It is, therefore, clearly not the case that, while still upon it, he either saw or knew (as some have implied) that Massena was certainly turning his left flank, yet declined the opportunity of attacking him to advantage.

The secrecy with which the construction of the lines of Torres Vedras was carried on appears almost inexplicable. It says much for the activity of Wellington's posts, and the patriotism of the Portuguese, without which not even the death penalty held over all who communicated with the enemy could have prevented some intelligence of their existence reaching the French.

The ability with which Hill aided Wellington in the operations of this campaign,—now closely

watching Reynier; now hurrying by forced marches towards Wellington (thus reaching him in time for the battle of Busaco); now preventing Massena from effecting a passage over the Tagus into the fertile districts of the Alemtejo,—have always been much praised. Promptitude and daring in action, combined with a readiness to subordinate his personal operations to the furtherance of Wellington's general plan, especially marked the character of Hill, rendering him conspicuously a model for soldiers. It is most interesting, too, to read Wellington's remarks upon Craufurd's error in remaining too long on the right bank of the Coa.

"I had positively desired him not to engage in any affair on the other side of the Coa, and I repeated my injunction that he should not engage in an affair on the right of the river, in answer to a letter in which he told me that he thought the cavalry could not remain there without the infantry. . . . You will say, if this is the case, why not accuse Craufurd? I answer, because, if I am hanged for it, I cannot accuse a man who I believe has meant well, and whose error is one of judgment and not of intention; and indeed I must add, although my errors, and those of others also, are visited heavily upon me, that is not the way in which any, much less a British army, can be commanded."—*Supplementary Correspondence of the Duke of Wellington; Letter to the Honourable W. Pole, Celorico, July* 31*st*, 1810.

Soult, as we have seen, made no efficient attempt

in the campaign to aid Massena. Some writers have accused him of jealousy of that marshal, but possibly the siege of Cadiz, the pacifying of Andalusia, and the quelling the guerilla bands, gave him, as he asserted, so much to do that he was unable to accomplish more.

The value to an army acting on the defensive of such works as those of Torres Vedras is well illustrated. These lines had almost all the advantages of perfect defensive works. They were strong by nature and art, permitted the holders of them to move out freely, had their flanks secure, a good communication for the defenders in rear, and obstacles in front which much interfered with the enemy's attacking them. They saved Portugal, and turned the scale of war against the French.

So, at the end of the year 1810, the contest in the Peninsula was thus balanced:—

The French had succeeded in confining the British to one corner of Portugal; had *captured Ciudad-Rodrigo and Almeida*; and subdued almost all Spain, with the exception of Cadiz (which still held out) and Badajoz. They could also draw large reinforcements from France.

On the other hand, they had not driven Wellington out of Portugal; the confidence of the British and Portuguese troops in themselves and in their leader had been deepened; and the British Government and people, aroused by the victory of Busaco, and the check to Massena, were more inclined to prosecute the war.

CHAPTER VIII

CAMPAIGN IN PORTUGAL AND SPAIN, 1811

(First Period)

OPERATIONS NEAR CADIZ — BARROSA — RETREAT OF MASSENA FROM BEFORE THE LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS—EXPULSION OF THE FRENCH FROM PORTUGAL FOR THE THIRD TIME

The campaign of 1811, like that of 1809, may be divided conveniently into two periods: the first defensive—*i.e.* the expulsion from Portugal of the invading army of Massena; the second offensive, being preparatory to Wellington's campaign against the French in Spain in 1812.

The operations of 1811 have been viewed by some as forming, perhaps, among all the Peninsular campaigns, the most complete illustration of Wellington's mastery of the art of war.

Though not marked by such brilliant victories as that of Salamanca in 1812, and Vittoria in 1813, they made evident to the world his superiority as a leader in both defensive and offensive fighting; his skill both in strategy and tactics; his marvellous resource in overcoming difficulties;

his discernment of the weak points of his adversary; and his power of handling a small army so as to baffle and overcome a far more numerous one. It placed beyond question his right to be ranked among the great military commanders of the world. Jan. 1811

The campaign was in a large measure one of battles, sieges, and close fighting in various quarters; but at the same time it affords striking lessons in the broader movements of strategy. It had also a very important bearing upon the struggle for the freedom of the Peninsula, and it opened with two events of great interest and consequence—viz. the defeat of the French under Victor at Barrosa near Cadiz in Spain, and the retreat of Massena from before the lines of Torres Vedras in Portugal.

It has been mentioned that Massena at the close of 1810, finding his passage to Lisbon barred by the lines of Torres Vedras, while a long extent of half desolate and hostile country lay between him and his nearest supports, had sent General Foy to Napoleon imploring aid. The Emperor, however, had already determined in his own mind upon the invasion of Russia; and partly upon this account, and partly because he considered that the forces of Massena and Soult should be of themselves a match for the Allies, he refused to aid Massena further than by directing Soult to act vigorously in his support from the direction of Badajoz.

In accordance with this order Soult, early in January, 1811, having left a force (under Marshal

Jan. 1811

Victor) to keep up the blockade of Cadiz, marched towards Badajoz, invested it on January 26th, and took it from the Spaniards, who defended it with but little determination, on March 10th. This siege is called the *French Siege of Badajoz.*

But he had hardly captured Badajoz when he was informed that his troops blockading Cadiz were in danger, so, leaving a garrison in the captured fortress, he returned to aid them.

This peril to the blockading force at Cadiz, which brought Soult back there, arose as follows:—

An expedition, consisting of 5,000 British troops, with some Portuguese and a Spanish contingent (about 11,000 in all), had left Cadiz by sea on January 21st, 1811, under Sir Thomas Graham (afterwards Lord Lynedoch), with the object of proceeding eastward to Tarifa; and, after a juncture with some other troops in that neighbourhood, attacking the French force near Cadiz in rear—the blockaded garrison co-operating on their approach by issuing from the works.

The vessels conveying this expedition were carried by adverse winds past Tarifa; but, landing at Algesiras, marched to that place; and, on January 27th, 1811, the Allies moved forward from Tarifa, General La Pena, a Spaniard, being in chief command.

On the march they were joined by a body of Spanish guerillas, and had some sharp fighting with the French. Victor, as they neared Cadiz, came out from his lines, formed up under cover of a neighbouring wood, and prepared to oppose

their attempt to raise the siege. This brought on the March 5, 1811

BATTLE OF BARROSA

March 5th, 1811

(See plan facing page 164)

In this battle the Allies, under La Pena, including the Spanish guerilla bands, numbered about 13,000, with 24 guns; and of these some 4,000, under Graham, were British.

The French, under Victor, actually engaged were about 9,000 strong, with 14 guns; 5,000 supporting troops being at only a few miles' distance.

The ridge of Barrosa, which was occupied by the Allies on March 5th, is about four miles from the sea-mouth of the ship canal of Santi Petri, which here forms the boundary of the island of Leon, on which was situated the strongly fortified city and harbour of Cadiz.

Across this canal the garrison of Cadiz were to endeavour to throw a bridge, by which to communicate with the Allies as they approached; and this, it may be here said, they subsequently succeeded in doing.

The ridge of Barrosa runs inland from the seashore for about a mile and a half, commanding a small, broken plain in front of it, while between it and the Santi Petri was another ridge, called the Bermeja Hill.

The plain between these two elevated ridges was bordered by the sea on one side and a close country (consisting of a belt of pines and the forest of Chiclana) on the other.

March 5, 1811 The commanding ridge of Barrosa was a most important position for the Allies to retain possession of, while they advanced down from it towards the Bermeja Hill and the Santi Petri; and Graham urged La Pena to leave sufficient troops to hold it when they moved into the plain below. La Pena, however, disregarding this advice, directed Graham to advance through the wood to the Bermeja Hill, and having with a Spanish force managed to open communication across the Santi Petri with the Cadiz garrison, left the Barrosa ridge himself, taking with him all his troops, with the exception of a small force, which remained there as a rear-guard, and to protect the baggage massed upon the ridge.

Seeing no large body of the enemy in his front, and not having examined the Chiclana Forest to his right, he then advanced towards the Santi Petri by a road close to the sea-shore.

But during these movements, Victor, with 9,000 men and 14 guns, hidden from view in the Chiclana woods, had been closely watching the Allies with his scouts. Ascertaining that their forces were scattered—Graham being in the wooded ground, the Spaniards on the sea road moving to the Bermeja Hill, and the baggage, with protecting troops of no great strength, massed on the Barrosa ridge—he issued with three French divisions, under Laval, Villatte, and Ruffin, to attack the Allies.

Laval moved against Graham's flank; Villatte against the Spaniards in the direction of the Santi Petri, where the garrison of Cadiz had thrown a

bridge across the canal; and Ruffin, ascending the Barrosa ridge from the reverse side, to the north, carried the height, drove off and dispersed the rear-guard, scattered the baggage, and compelled the small British baggage-guard, under Major Brown, to fall back. March 5, 1811

This officer retired slowly, and in good order, into the plain, sending to Graham for instructions.

The Allies were now in a dangerous position; Graham had to decide whether to move on to the Bermeja Hill, and endeavour to reach the Santi Petri, and thence Cadiz; or to attack the French who were on his flank, and (together with a number of fugitives) pressing upon his rear. La Pena's Spaniards towards the sea were neither visible to, nor in touch with him.

He took the bold course, and directing Brown to turn and fight, faced about himself, and made a counter-attack upon Laval and Ruffin, although he saw that the Barrosa ridge was already in the enemy's hands.

A fierce contest now ensued, the British fighting with desperate determination to extricate themselves from their position. The French being in their rear, their baggage lost, and with no certainty of being able to reach Cadiz, it was necessary for them to conquer, or submit to a defeat which would probably be disastrous.

In this juncture, Graham, with his troops, rose to the occasion.

Attacking Laval and Ruffin with two separate masses of men, hastily got together "without" (writes Napier) "attention to regiments or brigades, so

March 5, 1811

sudden was the affair," the British not only checked the French advance, but eventually, so resolute was their onset, overthrew their opponents, drove them back, and, after sustaining heavy loss themselves, regained the Barossa ridge.

In this attack the 87th Regiment (now the 1st Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers) under Major (afterwards Viscount) Gough, captured the eagle of the French 8th Regiment*; and the British artillery—10 guns—under Major Duncan, by its accurate and rapid fire, contributed largely to the success attained.

The broken French endeavoured, after they had rallied, to renew the battle, but Duncan's guns caused them such heavy loss that they gave up the effort, and Victor withdrew his troops from the field.

La Pena had rendered no aid to Graham in this struggle; and the British, having been marching or fighting for many hours without food, were too exhausted to pursue.

The battle of Barrosa itself lasted only one and a half hours, but the British loss was 50 officers and nearly 1,200 men. The French loss was over 2,000, with 6 guns and an eagle. Generals Ruffin and Chaudron-Rousseau were mortally wounded.

After the battle Graham remained for some hours on the Barrosa height. The French were now in full retreat towards the village of Chiclana, and he hoped that La Pena would attack them; but that general, though he had been joined by 4,000 more troops from Cadiz (who had crossed

* Taken by Sergeant Masterson, who received a commission for the capture.

the Santi Petri), and had a force of 12,000 infantry and 800 cavalry under his command, made no effort to pursue. March 5, 1811

Graham, therefore, determining that he could no longer carry on field operations in concert with him, crossed the Santi Petri, leaving him on the Bermeja Hill, and re-entered Cadiz, whither La Pena soon followed him. Victor, a short time afterwards, observing that the Allies made no advance, resumed the blockade, and was subsequently joined by Soult.

"Barrosa," as a bar to the Peninsular medal, and a battle-honour, commemorates the battle; and the 87th Regiment was granted for it an eagle, with wreath of laurel round it, for a badge. In explanation of this badge it is interesting to mention that the captured eagle had round its neck a metal wreath, granted (an exceptional distinction) by the Emperor Napoleon to commemorate, it is said, the gallantry of the French 8th Regiment at the battle of Talavera.

This trophy was eventually deposited in the chapel of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, where its original staff and a facsimile of the eagle still remain; but the eagle itself was broken off and stolen in 1852, shortly after the funeral of the Duke of Wellington—previous to which the Duke's body had lain in state in the hall of the hospital. It has never since been recovered.

The battle of Barrosa was a victory, because the French attack was defeated with loss, and Victor's troops driven back; but the object for which the

March 5, 1811

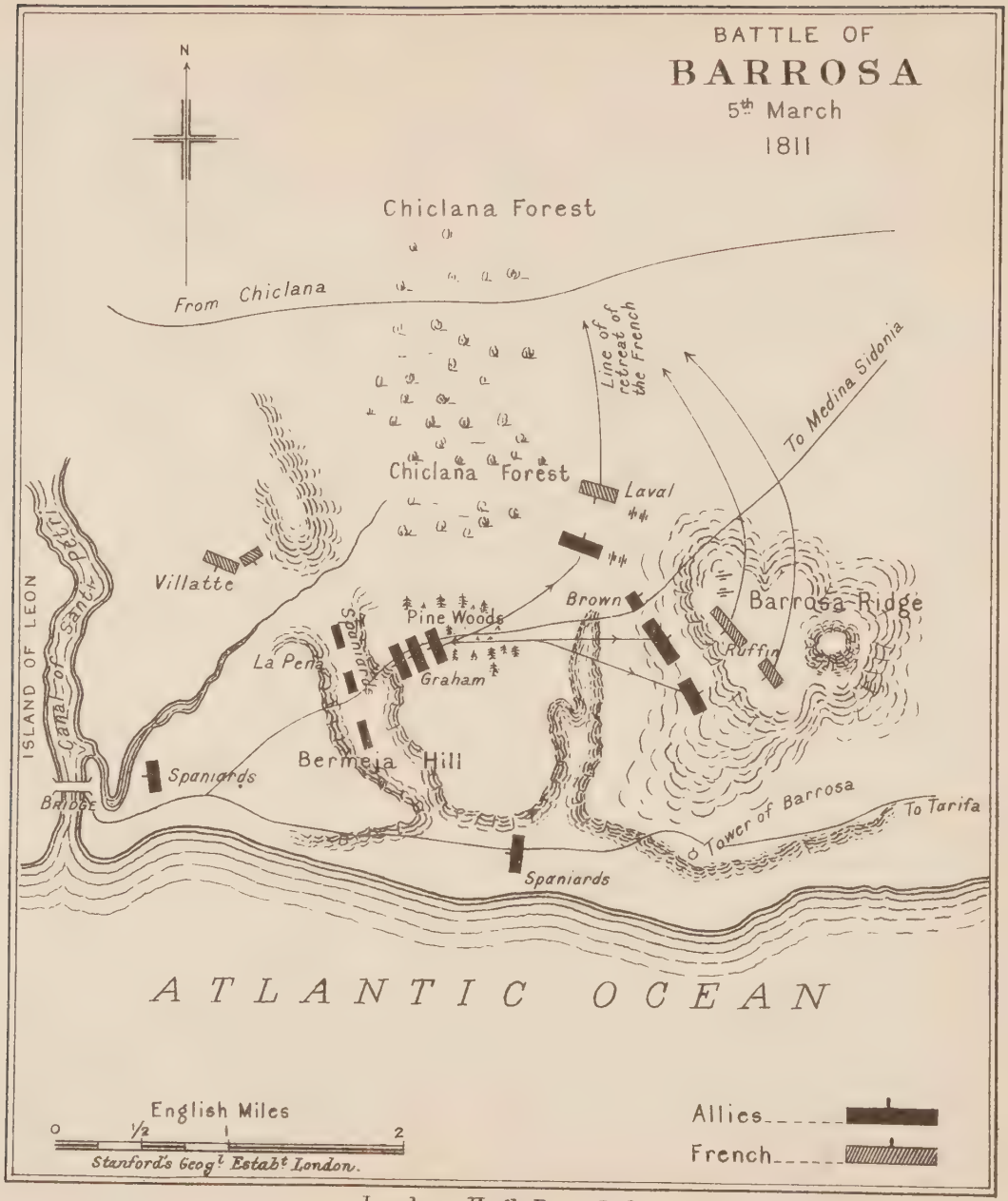
Allied expedition set out—viz. to raise the siege of Cadiz—was not attained. No permanent result followed the battle, because the Spaniards, neither during the contest nor after it, co-operated duly. Had they done so Victor's defeat would most probably have been more complete, and the raising of the siege of Cadiz would have followed upon it.

Graham, like Sir Arthur Wellesley at Talavera, had found that he could not work effectively with the Spanish leaders, who, though they and their troops showed much gallantry at times, were difficult to deal with in many respects.

The battle affords a notable instance of how gallantry and resolution may wrest victory out of impending defeat, and troops emerge, through these qualities, triumphant out of danger. It forms another illustration, also, of a successful counter-stroke in battle made under the difficult circumstances of having to turn about and retake a height from an enemy who has already obtained the advantage of securing a position there, on the line of retreat.

Wellington's soldiers in the battles of the Peninsular War and at Waterloo set an example of cool and determined courage to their successors for all time.

The bold course which Graham took was probably also the most prudent, for, pressed by the victorious French and followed by many fugitives from the Barrosa ridge, it would have been extremely difficult for him to pass the narrow bridge over the Santi Petri, and reach the island of Leon.



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We need dwell no further upon the operations in this portion of Spain than to say that the battle of Barrosa shows the danger which may be incurred by advancing past a wood or forest like that of Chiclana without first reconnoitring it, and to mention that the great value of Cadiz, both to the British and the French, lay in the fact that whoever held it was in possession of a fortified port which a fleet could enter, and that while the British occupied it the French domination in Andalusia was necessarily incomplete. March 5, 1811

We now revert to Wellington's operations in Portugal.

RETREAT OF MASSENA

On the same day (March 5th, 1811) on which the battle of Barrosa was fought near Cadiz, Massena commenced to retreat from before the lines of Torres Vedras.

Up to this time he had remained in the position which he held at the close of 1810, waiting for Soult to move northward, the ground he occupied being both naturally strong, and strengthened by earthworks. The hostile armies of the French and Allies had thus faced each other throughout January and February, 1811, divided only by a bridge at the end of a narrow causeway across a marsh, which was mined by the Allies, and on the other hand commanded by French guns.

We have mentioned the instructions which had been issued by Wellington to the Portuguese peasantry, before the Allied retreat to the lines,

March 5, 1811

to destroy all their crops, and to carry off their cattle, so as to leave no food available for the French. This order was partially carried out, but only partially. One can understand the difficulty there must have been in enforcing such a decree under the circumstances of a hurried retreat, and the natural reluctance to obey it on the part of the peasants. As a fact, although most of the mills were destroyed, the movables carried off, and the country abandoned—250,000 Portuguese retiring towards the lines and across the Tagus—yet large tracts of land covered with wheat remained untouched, especially near Santarem, so that Massena had been able to subsist his troops longer than ought to have been the case.

But by March 5th, 1811, his army had fallen into such great distress, and his necessities had become so urgent, that he could delay no longer for Soult, and having heard also that reinforcements were arriving at Lisbon for Wellington (some 7,000 men had landed), he at last gave way. After a feint to cross the Zezere and attack Abrantes, he sent off in advance his baggage and what stores he could move; blew up the works he had established at Punhete, with the view of constructing a bridge over the Tagus; and destroying some of his baggage and what guns he could not horse, commenced in the night his celebrated retreat out of Portugal.

The horrors of this retreat can hardly be exaggerated. As the French, pressed by Wellington, fell back through the wasted districts in their rear, they perished in great numbers from hunger and

the sword; and in their fury and exasperation, marked their track by murder, rapine, and burning villages. March 5-10, 1811

Massena retired in two columns. Junot and Montbrun's cavalry, followed by Ney, by Thomar and Leirya, making for Pombal and Coimbra; a flanking force marching by Thomar and Espinhal on Murcella. (See Map IV., facing page 178.) A portion of Ney's corps remained behind long enough to complete the destruction of the stores at Punhete, and then followed the main body.

By March 8th the whole army was on the move, and Wellington, as soon as he was sure that Massena was in full retreat, and did not contemplate an attack on the lines from the direction of Leirya, ordered a portion of the Allied force towards Badajoz, having heard of the investment of that fortress by Soult. With the rest of the army he followed Massena, his divisions marching through Thomar and Leirya to Pombal, except one brigade, which from Thomar followed the French flanking force towards Espinhal.

Wellington sent orders also from Thomar to the Portuguese to break up the roads between the Mondego and the Douro, remove all boats from these rivers, and look to the security of Oporto.

The French, however, had gained a start of nearly four days upon their pursuers.

On March 10th Wellington at Pombal (see map facing page 178) came up with Ney, commanding Massena's rear-guard, whose object it was to keep back the Allies by taking up strong positions on the line of retreat (which Wellington must

March 10-13, 1811

turn, or bring up his troops in order of battle to attack), retiring from them before a superior force of his enemy could close with him.

Wellington saw that the position at Pombal was strong, and that Massena appeared determined to fight, so having heard that Badajoz could hold out for some time longer, he counter-ordered the troops he had directed towards that fortress, instructing them to join him.

But on the night of the 10th, Ney, after a short skirmish at Pombal, and several manœuvres to delay the Allies, retired to another strong position near Redinha, showing such a bold front that Wellington, uncertain whether the whole French army was not behind him in support, was compelled to make detailed dispositions for the attack.

Detaching divisions (on March 12th) to the right and left with a view to turn Ney's flanks, he was about to move himself against the centre, when Ney, having opposed his progress as far as he dare, set fire to Redinha, and rapidly withdrew towards Condeixa.

Now Massena had given Ney, whom he had strengthened with a portion of Junot's corps, stringent orders to make a very determined stand in front of Condeixa, while he (Massena) sent Montbrun's cavalry to reconnoitre the roads towards Coimbra and Murcella, and if possible seize the former place, so that the French could retreat through it towards Oporto. Ney took up a position, accordingly, covering Condeixa, Montbrun proceeding to Coimbra; but the Allies coming up

in Ney's front on March 13th, and a division having been detached to turn his left, he, in fear of being cut off from the road through Miranda * to Murcella, as well as prevented from crossing the Mondego at Coimbra, set fire to Condeixa and retired (sacrificing part of his baggage) to Cazal Nova, whither Massena, on hearing that Ney had abandoned Condeixa, had also ordered Junot to fall back. March 13-14, 1811

The French on their retreat to Cazal Nova were in a critical situation. Montbrun had, on nearing Coimbra, found the bridge destroyed and the Portuguese in position on the right bank. He was unable to move by Condeixa, which Ney was abandoning, and so was forced to try and join Massena by a circuitous and difficult route up the Deuca River to Miranda; while Wellington, by moving two of his divisions round Ney's left flank, pressed the French hard, endeavouring to forestall them at Cazal Nova; to cut in between Ney and Junot; and to intercept the French flanking force (under Reynier) at Miranda, which was marching from Thomar, by Espinhal, on Murcella.

The Allies, however, though they caused great distress to the French, and nearly cut off Ney from Junot, did not completely attain their objects; Ney showed fight in every available position, and both Montbrun and Reynier eventually succeeded in joining him at Miranda.

On the 14th there was a sharp engagement at Cazal Nova, whence Ney, having again destroyed

* This village is called sometimes "Miranda" and sometimes "Miranda de Corvo."

March 14-21, 1811

a quantity of baggage and ammunition to lighten his march, retired through Miranda, burning that village, to Foz d'Arouce on the River Ceira.

Experience had now shown Wellington the various ruses to which Ney resorted, as well as his real object and approximate strength. He therefore pressed him vigorously from point to point. Every position the French assumed was quickly turned or attacked, Wellington constantly resorting to turning movements, and the retreat went steadily on. At Foz d'Arouce there was an engagement on the 15th with the Allies, and subsequently a French eagle thrown into the River Ceira was recovered.* After this Wellington sent off Beresford with a considerable force to recapture Badajoz—of the fall of which, to the French, on March 10th, he had received intelligence—while he himself continued the pursuit of Massena.

From Foz d'Arouce the French retired behind the Alva, blowing up the bridge over the Ceira; but finding the one over the Mondego cut, and the Portuguese on the right bank, were forced to keep to the south of the latter river.

At Moita Wellington was reluctantly obliged to halt, as he had outrun all his supplies, and had to procure them from the mouth of the Mondego. This gave Massena some breathing time, and on March 21st, having destroyed yet more of his baggage and ammunition, he reached Celorico and Guarda.

He now determined to move by Sabugal into

* This eagle, which belonged to the French 39th Regiment, is now in the chapel of the Royal Hospital at Chelsea.

the valley of the Tagus, and endeavour to unite with Joseph or Soult,* instead of retiring to Almeida, on the road to which place he might be opposed by the Portuguese moving up the right bank of the Mondego; but Ney, becoming somewhat insubordinate, had already marched a short distance towards Almeida. This, and the fact of provisions being very scarce, caused delay, and prevented Massena from carrying out his resolve. He now deprived Ney of his command, and, having been attacked by Wellington at Guarda on March 29th, marched to Sabugal, resolving to retreat, if pressed, to Ciudad-Rodrigo.

March 22 to April 5, 1811

On April 3rd he was again attacked by Wellington in his position near Sabugal, on the right bank of the Coa. Here there was a sharp fight, owing to a brigade of the Light Division coming unexpectedly in a thick fog into contact with a very superior French force. The British troops held their ground on this occasion so tenaciously that Wellington described the action in his despatch as "one of the most glorious British troops were ever engaged in."

Massena's left having in this action been skilfully turned, he retired over the Portuguese frontier on April 5th, 1811, falling back on Ciudad-Rodrigo, and thence to Salamanca.

Thus Massena was driven out of Portugal, having suffered great hardships, and lost, since he entered it, 30,000 men, of whom many had died

* This course would seem to have been the best open to him. A serious advance of the French in strength up the Tagus would probably have drawn Wellington away from Almeida and Ciudad-Rodrigo.

of starvation or disease, and about 6,000 perished in the retreat alone.

COMMENTS ON THE RETREAT

The retreat of Massena, and his pursuit by Wellington, afford lessons of great military value.

The line by which the French retired—viz. that by Pombal and Leirya upon Coimbra—should be first considered.

When Massena broke up from Santarem he might have endeavoured to retire across the Zezere to Castel-Branco, in the hope of gaining thence the valley of the Tagus, and joining with Joseph or Soult; and this would possibly have had the effect of drawing away the Allies from Almeida and Ciudad-Rodrigo.

On the other hand, the roads in this direction were very indifferent, some of them having been broken up by Wellington; and the Allies from Abrantes and Vilha Vilha might have interfered with his march.

By retiring towards Coimbra he avoided much risk from the Allies near Abrantes, and had somewhat better roads. Also, could he seize Coimbra, he might then decide whether to wait there, proceed to Oporto, or retire to Almeida, according to circumstances.

Thus, as a choice among difficulties, the line taken by Massena appears to have been the best, as being beset by the fewest dangers; but having taken it, it became a point of great moment to him to secure the passage of the Mondego at Coimbra.

Condeixa and Coimbra had then become points of great strategical importance to him, for his position was this :—

If he could pass the Mondego at Coimbra he would reach the comparatively unexhausted district between the Mondego and the Douro, where he could obtain supplies and possibly reinforcements, and whence further retreat would be in any case less difficult than if he were forced to take the road to Murcella, through Miranda.

He might, especially if he could seize Oporto, maintain himself in Northern Portugal, obliging Wellington to come very far north before he could drive him (Massena) over the Portuguese boundary.

At Condeixa the roads to Coimbra and Murcella branch off. Therefore if Massena were driven north beyond Condeixa, he would be cut off from the branch road to Murcella, in which case he must force the passage of the Mondego at Coimbra or take to difficult mountain tracks, with the probable loss of his artillery and baggage.

It was, therefore, his special object to secure Coimbra ; and when Montbrun reported to him that the bridge there was broken and the enemy on the opposite bank of the river, it became an urgent matter to him to maintain Condeixa till he could withdraw his baggage and guns towards Miranda.

Possibly Montbrun, by a determined effort, might have driven off the Portuguese at the bridge of Coimbra, and Massena might have succeeded in repairing this bridge and crossing there ; but it must be remembered that Wellington was pressing hard

upon Ney at Condeixa, and had the French not decided at once to take the road thence to Miranda, the opportunity of doing so might have been lost.

As it was, Montbrun was very nearly cut off, and some of the French baggage had to be sacrificed, as it could not be withdrawn.

Massena blamed Ney for not having remained longer at Condeixa. As to this, it may be said that while some have held the view that Ney at this particular juncture did not do his best—because he was personally averse to retiring in any other direction than to Almeida, and also was not on cordial terms with Massena—still, there is no doubt that his left flank was being turned by the Allies when he abandoned the village.

But whether Ney evacuated Condeixa rather sooner than he possibly need have done, or not—a very moot point—all historians have agreed that both he and Massena showed military capacity of a high order in the general conduct of this retreat.

Massena, by sending on his baggage and impedimenta well in advance, and marching by Leirya, gained valuable time, and kept Wellington uncertain as to his real intentions.

Ney, by the judicious handling of the rear-guard and the strong positions which he occupied, delayed the Allies greatly.

In a protracted retreat the officer commanding a rear-guard has a most responsible duty to discharge. The safety of the main body whose march he is covering rests largely upon him. He has to select rapidly the most suitable positions, not easy

either to attack or to turn; then to so dispose his men upon them as to conceal his own strength, and retard the pursuit; then to hold them just long enough for his purpose, and withdraw just soon enough to avoid being cut off; and to carry all this out as a rule under very trying circumstances, for men in a long retreat—and especially if closely pressed and suffering from hunger and fatigue—have a tendency to lose heart and energy, and sometimes discipline.

Speaking of this retreat of Massena, the author of the life of Picton* says: "Retreat is ever a trying moment for a commander-in-chief; the movement is disliked by all, and opinions are hardly ever wanting to prove that it was produced by bad management, and that at any one stage it might have been stopped . . . thus Massena was accused by his whole staff of want of skill, while each in his turn accused the others of giving him bad advice."

Under no circumstances of war does a leader require the loyal and energetic support of all officers, and indeed of all ranks, more than when retiring pressed by the enemy; and no position calls for a strong, experienced, and active soldier more than that of the command of a rear-guard at such a time.

Ney proved here, as afterwards in Russia, that his qualifications fitted him, in an exceptional degree, for such a command.

* *Memoirs of Lieut.-Gen. Sir Thomas Picton*, by H. B. Robinson, 1836. vol. i. p. 404.

With respect to Wellington's operations in the campaign Napier speaks of "the nicety, the quickness, the prudence, and the audacity" * which marked them, and it may be said that all these qualities, the combination of which in any one individual is so very rare, were conspicuously manifested.

It has been held by some writers upon this campaign that he should have attacked Massena directly the latter began to fall back from the lines; not have suffered him to have gained four days' start in the retreat; and have pressed him generally with greater rapidity and vigour.

The answer to this criticism (one made with a knowledge of Massena's exact intentions, which Wellington did not possess) is this. Wellington's object was to hold Portugal and drive the French out of it, but in doing so to lose as few men as possible, and risk no repulse which might strengthen the hands of the party in England opposed to a continuance of the war.

The French in their disastrous retreat were themselves carrying out his main object for him; and the following words in which, at the time, he explained his reason for abstaining from pressing Massena more closely at Miranda (which would probably have resulted in the capture of the French artillery and baggage), show his general policy clearly:—

"I have now an opportunity to inflict a severe loss on the enemy, but not without losing many of my own troops; I prefer therefore to harass

* Napier's *History of the Peninsular War* (Ed. 1834), vol. iv. p. 365.

them, and send them out of the country as a rabble—when from want of organization, and from sickness, they will not be able to act for many months; and keep my own army entire, rather than to weaken myself by fighting them, and probably be so crippled as not to have the ascendant over the fresh troops on the frontiers. *Almeida and Badajoz are to be retaken.*" *

It is to be observed, also, that until the French in their retreat were well clear of Leirya it was doubtful whether Massena's design was certainly to retire; or his retirement a mere blind to draw the Allies out after him towards Thomar, while from Leirya he moved rapidly down to the west of the Sierra Baragueda, and attacked the lines in that direction.†

The refusal of Wellington to commit himself incautiously to the attack during the pursuit of Massena, his waiting before Pombal for reinforcements, the precision and ease with which he handled his troops, and the foresight he showed in forestalling the French at Coimbra, are all proofs of that "prudence, nicety, and quickness" to which Napier alludes (see page 176).

Later on, in the second period of this campaign and in the operations of 1812, while these qualities are further illustrated, we shall see many instances of the "audacity" and resolution with which, for a sufficient object, he undertook hazardous enter-

* We have placed the last sentence in italics, as it should be especially noted. It shows how Wellington was already looking forward to the offensive efforts for which he was husbanding his troops.

† *Journals and Sieges in Spain*, 1811-2, by Lieut.-Col. John T. Jones, R.E., 1814, p. 14.

prises, or boldly faced superior numbers of the enemy.

In this first period of the campaign of 1811, he "had saved Coimbra, forced the enemy into a narrow, intricate, and ravaged country, and with an inferior force turned him out of every strong position, and this by a series of movements based on the soundest principles of war." *

Massena had commenced the campaign of 1810 with the intention of driving the Allies out of Portugal. At the conclusion of his retreat he himself had been driven out, after his army had lost nearly 30,000 † men and endured the extreme of misery.

This forms the best testimony to the strategical skill of Wellington. It was not a triumph won by hard fighting merely, but by the plans of the Commander-in-Chief.

* Napier's *History of the Peninsular War,* vol. iii. pp. 473–4.

† Oman says about 25,000.

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CHAPTER IX

CAMPAIGN IN PORTUGAL AND SPAIN, 1811
(SECOND PERIOD)

BLOCKADE OF ALMEIDA, FUENTES D'ONOR—BERESFORD'S OPERATIONS, ALBUHERA—ENGAGEMENTS WITH MARMONT, EL BODON AND ALDEA DE PONTE—HILL'S OPERATIONS, ARROYO DOS MOLINOS—DEFENCE OF TARIFA

MASSENA having been driven out of Portugal, Wellington at once assumed the offensive; and, cantoning his troops on both banks of the Coa, invested Almeida (April 9th, 1811).

Then, leaving the army for a time under the command of General Spencer, he set off towards Badajoz to confer with Marshal Beresford, who, as we have mentioned, had left for Badajoz after the action of Foz d'Arouce on March 15th, 1811, to endeavour to recapture that fortress.

On reaching him Wellington found that he was just on the point of investing Badajoz, having been delayed a good deal on his march by having to bridge the Guadiana, reduce one or two small posts, and fight an action with the French under Mortier.

He reconnoitred the fortress with him on

April and May, 1811

April 22nd, 1811; but after that, having heard that Massena was advancing again with the object of relieving Almeida, returned northward immediately in order to oppose him. He arrived just in time, for Massena, aware of his departure for the south, had collected his troops at Salamanca, and was making a great effort to succour Almeida by introducing into it a convoy of supplies.

Crossing the Portuguese frontier on May 2nd, he attacked Wellington, who had taken up a position blockading Almeida, and close to the village of Fuentes d'Onor.

COMBAT AND BATTLE OF FUENTES D'ONOR

May 3rd and 5th, 1811

(See plan facing page 190)

Wellington's position extended for over five miles along a broad, elevated plateau or tableland, having in its front the River Dos Casas, and behind it the Rivers Turones and Coa. The right occupied at first the village of Fuentes d'Onor, where the plateau sank into an almost level plain in the direction of Nava d'Aver, and the left was at Fort Conception, on the road from Ciudad-Rodrigo to Almeida. The Allies numbered about 33,000 with 42 guns; the French about 45,000 with 30 guns.*

On the afternoon of May 3rd General Loison—for Massena himself had not yet come up—endeavoured to occupy Fuentes d'Onor, while threatening the rest of the position—the plateau being comparatively accessible close to that village; but

* Oman makes the number of the Allies to be greater, and of the French less than here stated. The Allies were weak in cavalry.

he was repulsed in the combat which ensued, after some hard fighting. May 4–5, 1811

On the 4th, Massena, having arrived, massed his troops to his left with the intention of making a more determined attack against the Allied right upon the following day; and Wellington, to meet it, extended his right considerably beyond Fuentes d'Onor, past Poco Velha to Nava d'Aver, across the level, but broken, plain. He also posted some Spaniards on a height above Nava d'Aver, which commanded the country adjacent, and the road from Ciudad-Rodrigo to Sabugal. His men were now extended over several miles of front, in addition to having to find a retaining force immediately round the fortress of Almeida.

On the morning of the 5th Massena commenced the battle of Fuentes d'Onor by a fierce attack against the Allied right, endeavouring also to turn it. During the battle the convoy which he desired to introduce into Almeida remained at Gallegos.

While a severe contest went on in the village of Fuentes d'Onor, which was at one time partially carried, the right was very hard pressed, and the Spaniards retired from Nava d'Aver. Wellington, fearing that Massena's numbers would enable him to turn his position, resolved to abandon the road to Sabugal, draw back his right, retiring across the broken plain in presence of the French till he reached the higher tableland, and there form it up between the Dos Casas and the Turones (in a line from Fuentes d'Onor towards Frenada), at right angles to the rest of the position. This

May 5–10, 1811

second position would still cover, though less directly, the roads, through Frenada, to Castello Bom and Almeida.

It was a change of front difficult to effect under the fire of a superior force. The Allied right, covered by the Light Division in squares, had to retire—a portion of them for some miles—over the plain, harassed throughout by the French cavalry; but the movement was carried out with success. Massena, after a heavy cannonade and half-hearted attempt against Wellington's new position, deemed it too difficult to attack, and having remained on his ground during May 6th, 7th, and 8th, withdrew, baffled, to Salamanca. During May 5th there had been desperate fighting also at Fuentes d'Onor, where there were some brilliant bayonet charges; but the village, though partially, was never entirely carried by the French.

Almeida was now left by Massena to its fate, and it fell to Wellington on May 10th, 1811, the greater part of the garrison having managed to escape, after blowing up a portion of the works and destroying the guns.

The loss of the Allies in the battle of Fuentes d'Onor was about 1,500; that of the French between 3,000 and 4,000. In the village of Fuentes d'Onor it was specially heavy.

"Fuentes d'Onor," as a bar to the Peninsular medal, and a battle-honour for regiments engaged, commemorates the day.

This battle is chiefly remarkable for the manner in which Wellington drew back his right, changing

the front of that portion of his line in the face of the enemy, and the bravery, discipline, and mobility with which his regiments carried out this movement, the infantry retiring in squares for miles, surrounded by the French cavalry, and protecting the baggage and camp-followers of the army. Had the squares been broken the retirement must almost certainly have ended in confusion, and then perhaps in the defeat of the Allies. Napier says, "There was not, during the war, a more dangerous hour for England."

A noteworthy occurrence also was the extraordinary feat of arms of Captain Norman Ramsay, of the Royal Horse Artillery, who, finding himself cut off * by the rapid advance of the French horse on the Allied right, without hesitation charged their cavalry with his guns, successfully cutting his way through. This exploit, so unparalleled in its nature, for probably never before or since in any battle has a mass of cavalry been charged by guns, made Norman Ramsay's name famous in the Peninsular army as that of a dauntless, intrepid officer. The incident has been more than once depicted on canvas, and Napier's well-known description of it † will bear repeating:—

"A great commotion was observed among the French squadrons; men and officers closed in confusion towards one point, where loud cries and the sparkling of blades and flashing of pistols indicated some extraordinary occurrence.‡ Suddenly the

* Most accounts state that a portion of the battery (two guns) only was cut off. Captain Ramsay was subsequently killed at Waterloo.

† Napier's *Peninsular War*, 1834, vol. iii. p. 513.

‡ Some British cavalry, seeing his position, had turned back to help him through (Oman).

multitude was violently agitated, an English shout arose, and Norman Ramsay burst forth at the head of his battery, his horses breathing fire, and stretching like greyhounds along the plain, his guns bounding like things of no weight, and the mounted gunners in close and compact order protecting the rear."

What is to be chiefly noted in this daring action is not its success, for the fall or death of a few artillery horses would have marred that; but the heroic spirit evinced by Ramsay and his gunners, and their stern resolution that neither they nor their guns should pass into the hands of the enemy.

We dwell longer than we otherwise should have done upon the battle of Fuentes d'Onor, because Wellington has been criticised for fighting it in the position he did; and also because it has been spoken of by some as almost a reverse, upon the ground that the Allies fell back from their original to a second position, and that Wellington did not attack or pursue Massena after the battle. It has been argued that for Wellington to have fought with the Rivers Turones and Coa, with few bridges over them, in his rear, in an extended position for his force, and with his right not very strongly supported, was to court danger unnecessarily.

The answer is that Almeida was on the *right* bank of the Coa. Wellington attached great importance, for reasons fully given in the next chapter, to the reduction of this fortress, and of Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz (Elvas was in his hands), situated as they were on the roads connecting

Spain with Portugal. He could only effectually blockade Almeida from the right bank of the Coa; and to have abandoned the tableland between the Turones and Dos Casas to the enemy would have been unwise. He was obliged to push his left to Fort Conception to bar the road leading to Almeida from Ciudad-Rodrigo; and to have withdrawn the troops from thence during the battle to the right would have uncovered that road.

When Massena's intention to force the Allied right if possible became clearly evident, he met it by placing the Spaniards on the hill of Nava d'Aver —a commanding position—connecting them across the plain with the tableland by British troops. Had he not done this he must have left open the road past his right by Nava d'Aver to Seceiras (over the Coa) and to Sabugal, on his line of communication with Hill. This he did not desire to do unless compelled to, which in the battle he was, because Nava d'Aver was evacuated. Then he successfully took up the second position, which he permanently held, and which Massena (realising, no doubt by the manner in which this movement was carried out, the sort of enemy he had to deal with) did not attack.

Massena, therefore, failed in the purpose of his advance, while Wellington gained the object for which he had made his determined stand though in the battle he had no doubt some anxious moments. As to the loss sustained, that of the Allies was severe, but that of the French far more so.

In his despatch to Lord Liverpool on May 8th, 1811, Wellington explains why he did not attack the French after the battle and before their retreat, in these words: "The result of a general action brought on by an attack upon the enemy by us might, under the circumstances" (the superior strength of the French, especially in cavalry) "have been doubtful; and if the enemy had chosen to avoid it, or if they had met it, they would have taken advantage of the collection of our troops to fight this action, and thrown relief into Almeida." In other words, the main end for which Massena had fought (and lost) the battle of May 5th—*i.e.* to relieve Almeida—might in this way have been gained by him; and so Wellington would not attack unnecessarily.

Wellington's remarks* upon the battle are well worth quoting, as showing the frank spirit in which he could meet an unfavourable opinion of what he had himself accomplished. He writes: "Lord Liverpool was quite right not to move thanks for the battle of Fuentes, though it was the most difficult I was ever concerned in and against the greatest odds. We had very nearly three to one against us engaged†; about four to one of cavalry, and moreover our cavalry had not a gallop in them, while some of that of the enemy was fresh and in excellent order. If Bony had been there, we should have been beaten."

But with regard to this last sentence Wellington was before the battle perfectly aware that Bonaparte would not be there, and this leads us to

* *Supplementary Despatches of Wellington.*

† Meaning where the brunt of the fighting occurred.

touch upon what is occasionally met with in criticisms of the Peninsular campaigns—viz. that had Wellington been contending with the French Emperor and not with his marshals, certain operations in which he was successful would most probably have failed. This has the appearance, at all events, of implying that he did not evince in them a military capacity sufficient to cope with the genius of Napoleon.

Now, as his writings and actions show, no one ever rated Napoleon's presence with the French Army higher than Wellington did; (he estimated it as equal, in a sense,* to 40,000 men), or, it may be added, understood Napoleon's character better—but perhaps the very best proof of Wellington's commanding talents for practical affairs was that he dealt with men and circumstances as they existed, and not as they might have been. He formed his estimate of what Soult or Massena or Marmont would or could attempt from his discernment of their personal tendencies, characteristics, and difficulties, and in forming this estimate his judgment was very seldom wrong. It was because he opposed them with this clear insight into facts, and not as he might, or would, have opposed Napoleon had he been there, that he gained with his small army the victories which he did in Portugal and Spain.

* Not meaning that his presence at any period of a battle would have been equal to a reinforcement of 40,000 troops, but that it put an end largely to the jealousies of the marshals; that he was the Sovereign, the fountain-head of rewards and honours; and that all the resources of France, civil, political, and military, were turned towards the seat of *his* operations.—*Reminiscences of the Duke of Wellington*, by the Rev. G. R. Gleig, pp. 312-3.

But it is true that the attempt of Napoleon to command his armies in the Peninsula from a distance played greatly into his hands; and it is instructive to give in this connection Wellington's remarks on the subject of the Corps organization of the French Army, and the way in which Napoleon's absence affected the troops * :—

"Each of the officers commanding these Corps d'Armée exercised over the movements of his own corps a command independent of all except of Napoleon himself. Not only they declined to obey each other, but would not attend to suggestions or advice in respect to the operations of their several corps in critical moments; and from the great caution with which it appears that Napoleon proceeded in placing one of these authorities in command over others, and the paucity of the instances in which he adopted such a measure, it may almost be believed that he was apprehensive of a refusal to obey the order. This organization of Corps d'Armée gave great efficiency to a French army when under Napoleon, and was very convenient in all great movements and operations; but it rendered it necessary for Napoleon himself to be present on all occasions in which it was necessary to employ more than one Corps d'Armée in an operation."

It may be added to this that in the same French corps there was often friction between divisions and

* *Memorandum on the War in Russia in* 1812, by the Duke of Wellington. This is given in the appendix to *Personal Reminiscences of the Duke of Wellington*, by the Rev. G. R. Gleig, 1904. Though written on the war in Russia, it applies equally to the Peninsular War.

brigades. In the battle of Fuentes d'Onor, Napier writes that there was much discord in Massena's army; that Massena himself was disgusted, as he knew that he was about to be superseded by Marmont; that "the Imperial Guards" (under Bessières) "would not charge at his order; Junot did not second him cordially; Loison neglected his instructions; Drouet sought to spare his own divisions in the fight; and Reynier remained perfectly inactive. Thus the machinery of battle, being shaken, would not work."

Under these circumstances Wellington's decision to give battle to Massena against heavy odds rather than allow Almeida to be relieved appears clearly vindicated. He was well aware of the general state of Massena's army, which he had driven out of Portugal; he could trust to his own troops, and the event justified his judgment.

It would have been no mark of military genius to have abandoned Almeida, and fallen back before Massena, as if the latter had been Napoleon at the head of an undefeated and united army.

Wellington does not in his despatch blame the Spaniards for retiring from Nava d'Aver, while the French were pressing back the Allied right; therefore it must be inferred that they were justified in this; but Napier writes that as the French cavalry commenced to form up in order of battle before the height, "Julian Sanchez" (commanding the Spaniards) "immediately retired across the Turones, partly in fear, but more in anger at the death of his lieutenant, who. having

April to May, 1811

foolishly ridden close up to the enemy, making many violent gestures, was mistaken for a French officer, and shot by a soldier of the Guards* before the action commenced." This was one of those regrettable incidents which may have had greater influence upon the battle than it should. But the abandonment of this height, whatever the cause of it may have been, compromised the safety of Wellington's right, and necessitated his drawing it back.

Fuentes d'Onor was a decided victory, but it is not impossible that the experience of this day may have had some effect in determining Wellington, later on (as we shall see), not to go beyond the Agueda—as he had in this instance beyond the Coa—when he blockaded Ciudad-Rodrigo, and faced Marmont at Fuente Guinaldo.

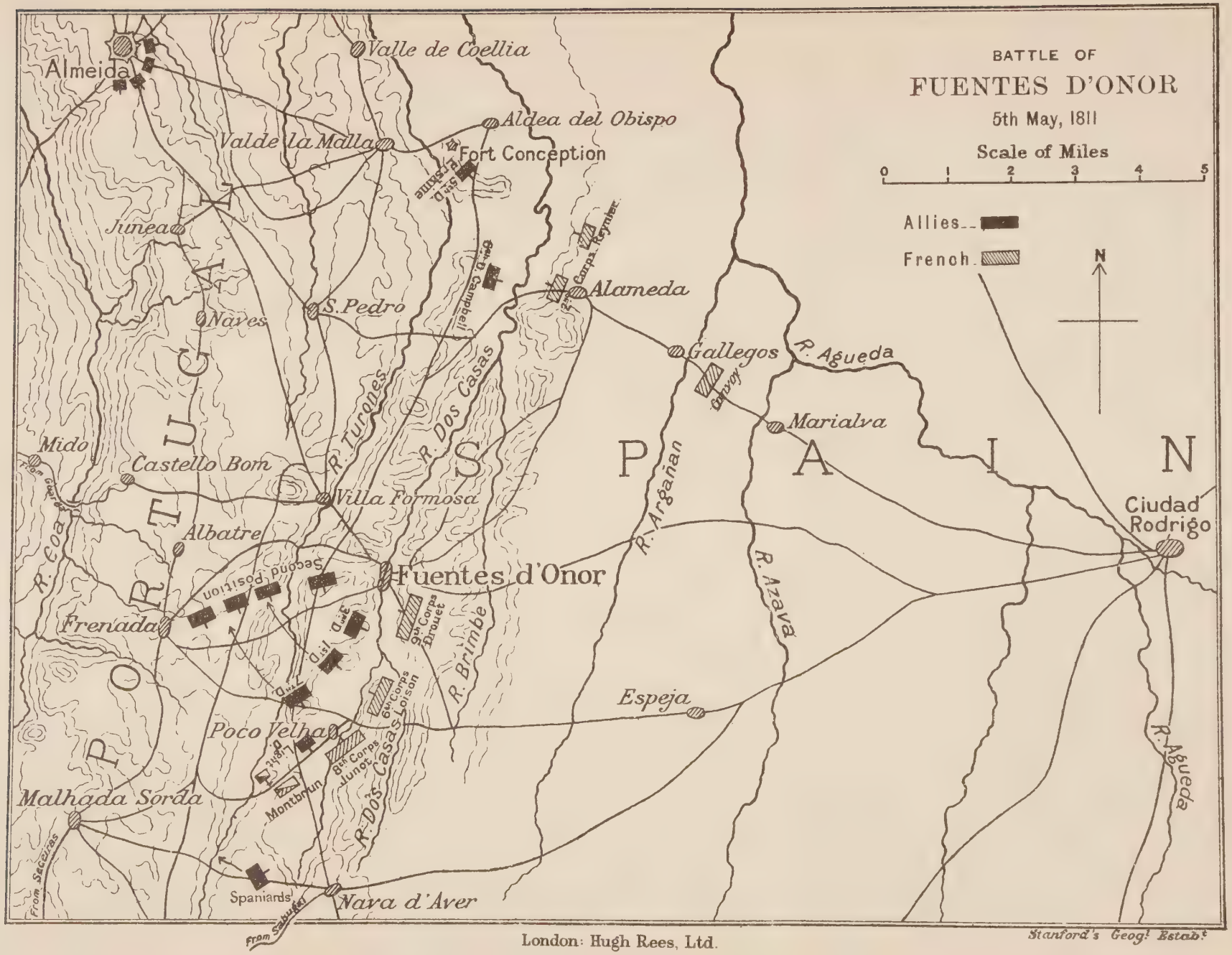
BERESFORD'S OPERATIONS

We must now turn to the operations of Beresford, who during Wellington's engagements with Massena near Almeida had been obliged to fight a serious battle with Soult close to Badajoz.

We have before said that Wellington, after reconnoitring Badajoz with him on April 22nd, 1811, set off to return to Almeida.

Shortly afterwards Soult came forward to relieve Badajoz, and Beresford, in order to give him battle to greater advantage, was obliged to discontinue the siege, and take up a position behind the River Albuhera, to bar Soult's approach to the fortress.

* Meaning the English Guards.



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This siege of Badajoz which the approach of Soult interrupted is called the *First English Siege of Badajoz.* May 16, 1811

Soult now attacked Beresford in his position, bringing on the

BATTLE OF ALBUHERA

May 16*th*, 1811

(See plan facing page 196)

This was one of the most—if not the most—close and desperate battles of the Peninsular War. It forms, with Corunna and Barrosa, the three at which Wellington himself was not present, but for which bars to the Peninsular medal were awarded.

The Allies—British, Portuguese, and Spaniards, under Beresford—numbered about 32,000, 7,000 being British, with 38 guns.* The French† were a little under 20,000, but were veteran troops, superior in cavalry, and had 40 guns.

The Allied position ran along the heights west of the Albuhera River, which rise up from the stream in gentle swells and easy slopes, varying from 60 to 150 feet above the water's edge,‡ the right being very slightly thrown back. The British 2nd Division (Stewart) and a Portuguese Division (Hamilton), with Otway's Cavalry (Portuguese), formed the centre and left, across the high roads from Albuhera to Badajoz and Valverde, Alten's Brigade holding the village and bridge of Albuhera.

* Oman says 35,000, of whom 10,000 were British and Germans.

† Divisions of Girard and Gazan added to brigades of Werlé and Godinot, and about 1,000 Grenadiers.

‡ Oman, *Journal of the Royal Artillery*, May 1909.

May 16, 1811

The Spaniards, under Blake and Castaños, were upon the right, stretching to over a mile south of the Valverde road. Behind was the 4th Division (Cole); to its right Lumley's British Cavalry; while Loy's Cavalry (Spanish) watched the extreme right. A knoll, or broad swell of ground, to the Spanish right front was not at first occupied.

The French on the south of the Albuhera, a river fordable at many points, were able in a great measure to conceal their dispositions and movements, under cover of very wooded ground.

Soult, observing that, if he could force the Spaniards from their position, and secure the rising knoll to their right front, he could get beyond and rake the Allied line, determined to make his main attack in that direction, at the same time moving against the village of Albuhera. The latter was successfully held; but the Spaniards, on the right, had to change their position to one facing south across the ridge, under fire, in order to meet adequately the formidable French attack. This, though they fought well,* they either could not or did not do sufficiently fully and quickly, and were driven back. Stewart's Division from the centre, which then came up to recover the lost ground, met at first with a very serious check. The morning was misty and wet, and the French cavalry, coming unexpectedly in the foggy weather upon Colborne's Brigade in flank, inflicted heavy loss upon it, taking 6 guns.† Confusion ensued; the battle appeared lost, and Beresford made preparations to retreat.

* Of Blake's force, the Division of Zayas fought most stubbornly and lost heavily.

† Five of these were subsequently recovered.

This was the crisis of the battle; but fortunately at this turning point a gallant advance of Sir Lowry Cole's Division, now brought up, restored the fortune of the day, the French being in their turn after a desperate struggle forced back, finally, from the field. "Nothing," says Napier, writing of this advance, "could stop that astonishing infantry* . . . their flashing eyes were bent on the dark columns in their front, their measured tread shook the ground, their dreadful volleys swept away the head of every formation . . . and the mighty mass" (of the French), "at length giving way like a loosened cliff, went headlong down the ascent." May 16, 1811

Thus victory was, in the very moment of their triumph, snatched from the French by the hard fighting of the British infantry. Soult now retreated to the shelter of the woods, and thence towards Seville, the result of the battle being that he had failed to relieve Badajoz, which was left to its fate.

The losses on both sides were very heavy, though the battle had only lasted four hours. They were on the part of the Allies about 7,000, and of the French 8,000, the British alone having lost nearly one-half of their strength.†

This battle, which was one of hard and downright fighting more than of skilful tactics, is commemorated by "Albuhera" as a bar to the

* The 7th and 23rd Regiments of the Fusilier Brigade (Royal, and Royal Welsh, Fusiliers) here specially distinguished themselves.

† Oman makes the losses of French and Allies nearly equal (about 6,000).

Peninsular medal, and on the colours and appointments of regiments engaged.

The success of Soult, before the advance of Cole's division had restored the day, is generally attributed to the fact that, the attack having been expected more towards the centre and left, covering the road to Badajoz, the French effort to roll up the right had not been foreseen.

The comparatively commanding ground in advance of the Spanish right was not, therefore, duly occupied, and no entrenchments were thrown up on the right. In explanation of this, to some extent, it is to be said that the succession of knolls on the right, rising one after the other, made it very difficult to shut out all favourable heights from the enemy.

The Spaniards, by all accounts, fought very gallantly on this day, particularly certain divisions; but Wellington (who was not present in the battle) writes thus from Elvas, after visiting the field, to Lieutenant-General Sir B. Spencer: "*May 22nd*, 1811.—I went yesterday to Albuhera, and saw the field of battle. We had a very good position; and I think should have gained a complete victory in it, without any material loss, if the Spaniards could have manœuvred; but unfortunately they cannot." And he writes also on May 20th to C. Stuart, Esq.: "The Spaniards, by all accounts, behaved remarkably well, but they were immovable."

Apparently, then, it was Wellington's opinion that had well-trained and mobile troops, confident

in themselves, and able to manœuvre and take up a new position in presence of the enemy, held the right, they would have foiled Soult's attack; and one lesson taught by this battle, and that of Fuentes d'Onor, seems to be the great importance of troops being mobile and quick, as well as steady and brave. Had Wellington's divisions at Fuentes d'Onor, or, as we shall see later on, at the combat of El Bodon, been unequal to manœuvring coolly and together under the enemy's fire, disaster would almost certainly have ensued.

The dull, misty weather also favoured Soult's attack.

Sir Harry Smith makes a remark in connection with this battle which is valuable and suggestive. He writes * that Sir William Stewart, commanding a brigade coming up at the critical moment when the British were being pressed back by the French, and having been accustomed himself to the drill of the 95th Rifles under Sir John Moore, gave in the heat of battle an order to a regiment advancing in column to deploy to the right into line on the leading company, which was the grenadier company.

This command was not understood, as it would have brought this company (the grenadier) on the left of the line, instead of the right, its usual place; disorder resulted, and consequent loss, which might have ended in disaster.

To understand this it must be explained that, at the time of the Peninsular War, and, indeed, until comparatively recently, the drill of the

* *Autobiography of Sir Harry Smith*, by G. C. Moore-Smith.

May, 1811

British infantry was less elastic than it has now become under the changes which breech-loading and magazine weapons have made imperative. Companies always expected to keep their special places in line, the grenadier company being on the right. Therefore, in deploying from column (that company leading), deployment should have been to the left.

But drill, under Sir John Moore's system, approximated more to that of our present infantry; deployments were made to either flank of any company as might be most convenient; and companies were habituated to occupy any place indifferently in line or column.

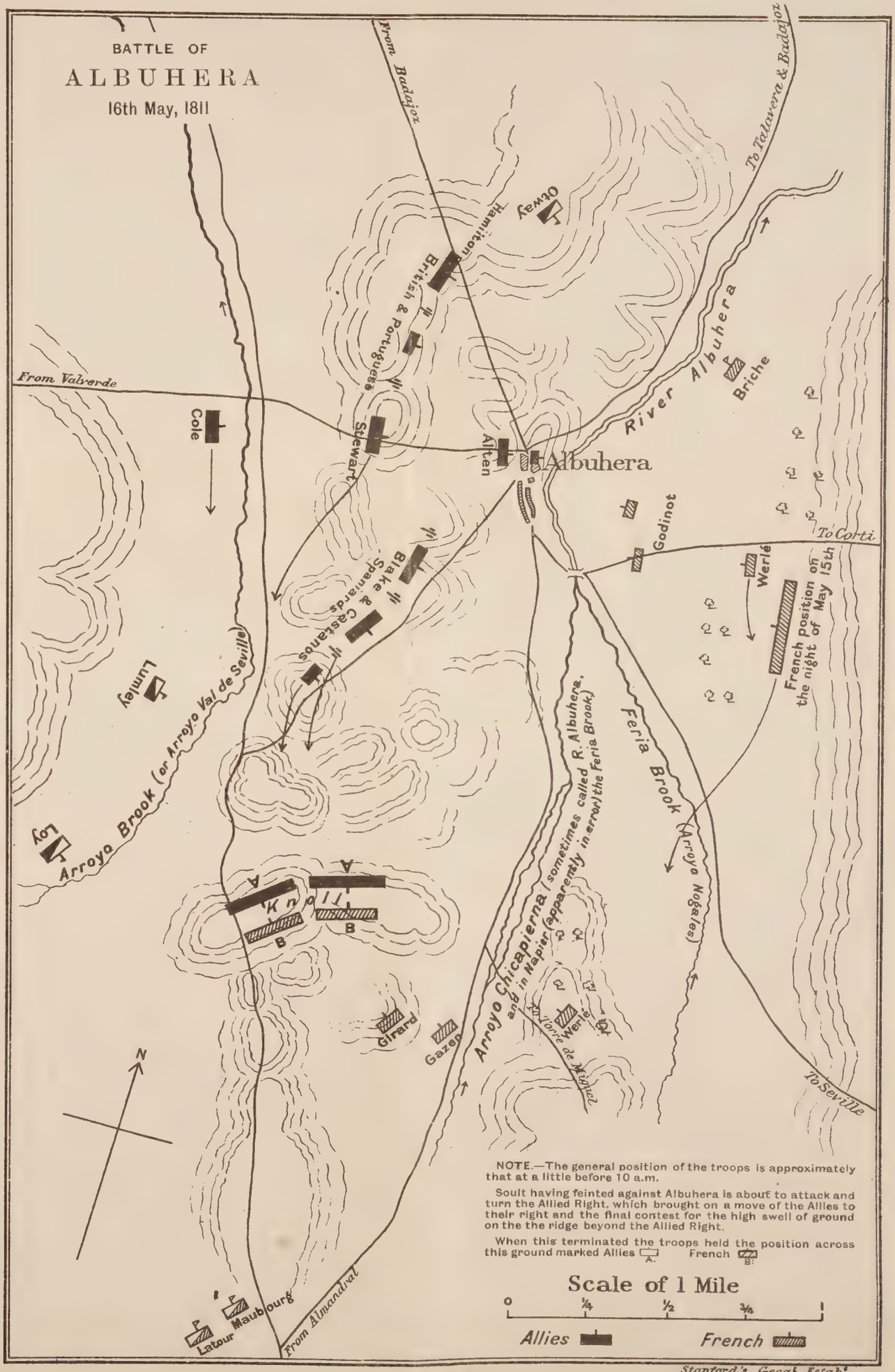
If Sir Harry Smith is correct in what he writes, the lessons suggested would appear to be these:—

That one cannot exaggerate the importance of what is taught in the training of troops during peace, because in accordance with that teaching will men of all ranks naturally act upon emergency in the heat of battle; and also that there are great advantages in the system of drill being simple, quick, and elastic.

That this need not involve a sacrifice of steadiness was illustrated at Fuentes d'Onor, in the long retirement of the Light Division in squares, unbroken, amidst the French cavalry, "trampling, bounding, shouting, and impatient to charge." *

To revert now to the main operations under Wellington.

* *Battles and Sieges in the Peninsula*, by Sir W. Napier, 1852.



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The great reputation with which Massena, after his career of victory elsewhere, had entered upon the campaign of 1810 against Wellington, had been sensibly lowered by his failure to force the lines of Torres Vedras and his subsequent disastrous retreat from Portugal, so that, after the battle of Fuentes d'Onor and the fall of Almeida, he was, by Napoleon's order, replaced in his command by Marshal Marmont. May to August, 1811

Wellington, having made Almeida safe, now set off southward again to Beresford, arriving after the battle of Albuhera had been fought by the latter, and in person resumed the siege of Badajoz (this siege being called the *Second English Siege of Badajoz*).

Two assaults of this fortress, however, failed; Marmont, marching southward from Salamanca across the Tagus, joined Soult; and in the end, upon the approach of the French in large numbers, Wellington was compelled to retire, and withdrew in June, 1811, towards Elvas, where he was joined by Spencer from the north.

He now prepared to oppose the entry of the combined forces of Marmont and Soult into Portugal by the road from Badajoz; but the French marshals had begun to find great difficulty in provisioning their armies—a point which we shall dwell on more particularly hereafter—and realising the serious opposition they would probably meet with, made no further attempt to cross the Portuguese boundary, but after a few weeks separated. Soult marched to Seville, and Marmont to Salamanca, whence, leaving only a small garrison in

Aug. to Sept. 1811

that town, he afterwards moved to the valley of the Tagus, occupying and strengthening the pass of Baños, and keeping up a communication with the French on the south bank of the river by the boat-bridge of Almaraz, which was defended by a strong tête-de-pont.

Wellington now, proceeding northwards once more, cantoned his army on both banks of the Agueda (August 10th, 1811), the main body being on the left bank, and commenced the blockade—not siege—of Ciudad-Rodrigo, hoping to force it to surrender from want of provisions, or at least to draw the French away from other parts of Spain to its succour.

His headquarters were at Fuente Guinaldo, and a corps under Hill, 14,000 strong, was posted, as in the previous year, in the Alemtejo to guard that province and Lisbon, and watch Elvas, a portion of this corps being now brought to the north of the Tagus near Castel-Branco.

Some very interesting movements now took place, both in the neighbourhood of Ciudad-Rodrigo and under Hill in the vicinity of the Tagus, which, though subsidiary to the greater operations of the campaign, were connected with them.

Their general design will be sufficiently understood by a reference to Map I.; but before we describe them we may say that the autumn of 1811 formed an important turning-point in the Peninsular struggle, and will review briefly the situation in Spain.

Much hung at this period upon the extent to which Napoleon himself would put forth his full strength and personal energy towards the expulsion of the Allies from the Peninsula. Sept 1811

France was, for the moment, at peace with the great Continental powers, and there was every indication that all his efforts were about to be turned seriously against the Allies in Spain. His invasion of Russia had not yet been irrevocably taken in hand; between July 19th and the end of September, 1811, reinforcements of over 50,000 men * had entered Spain from France, and it was considered most probable that Napoleon himself would soon follow with a large host.

General Hill writes at this time (October 1st, 1811) to his brother: "Next spring will probably decide the campaign for England or France in favour of the reinforcements which may arrive to either army.†

Under these circumstances, Wellington, while actively employed in the operations against the enemy in his immediate front, had taken steps to further perfect the lines of Torres Vedras, and strengthen the defences of Lisbon; so that, should he be compelled to retreat again within the lines, Napoleon should find the task of driving him out of Portugal to be even more difficult of accomplishment than Massena had found it.

Napier considers that the utmost efforts his great

* *Account of the War in Spain, Portugal, and the South of France,* by Lieut.-Col. John Jones, R.E., 2nd edition, 1821, vol. ii. p 21.

† *Life of Lord Hill,* by the Rev. Edwin Sidney, 1845.

Sept. 1811 antagonist could have put forth would have been foiled by Wellington, had the Portuguese duly supported him; but the issue was never tried, for the French Emperor, instead of leading his armies in person in the Peninsula, put himself at the head of those with which he commenced his disastrous campaign against Russia.

Wellington also made preparations, which we shall mention in the next chapter, for offensive operations in Spain, should he have an opportunity to undertake them in the following year, getting together a battering train at Lisbon, for the future reception and security of which the works of Almeida were afterwards strengthened; and improving the navigation of the Tagus and the Douro.

It had been the hope of Marmont, who was now in the valley of the Tagus, that as he had left but a small garrison at Salamanca, Wellington would be induced to advance by that city into Spain, which would afford the French an opportunity of falling upon his communications with Portugal and relieving Ciudad-Rodrigo.

But Wellington was not to be tempted forward; nor even to place himself with his main force in such a position near Ciudad-Rodrigo (which is on the right bank of the Agueda, a river subject to sudden rises) as might oblige him to fight a battle on that bank with the river in his rear.

He contented himself with maintaining with the Spaniards a blockade from his position on the left bank, whence he could throw out his posts so as

to interfere with supplies or succour reaching the fortress, except under convoy of a large force.* Sept. 21, 1811

His headquarters being at Fuente Guinaldo, which he entrenched, he watched the Perales Pass and the road from Pena Macor to observe and check Marmont, while with the rest of his army he carried on the blockade. His total force, much scattered, was about 40,000.

Ciudad-Rodrigo, after six weeks, began to be in difficulties for want of supplies, so Marmont, having failed to draw Wellington away from the fortress, was at last compelled to advance to its relief or allow it to fall into the hands of the Allies.

He therefore concerted with General Dorsenne in the north, who with a French corps, including the Imperial Guards, was threatening Galicia, to make a combined movement with him against Wellington, in order to throw a convoy of provisions into Ciudad-Rodrigo. While Dorsenne moved southwards with a convoy by Salamanca, he himself marched over the pass of Baños, north of Plasencia, with another convoy, and joined him on September 21st, 1811, on a large plain a few miles to the north-east of Ciudad-Rodrigo.

Their united forces, amounting to nearly 60,000 men, of whom 6,000 were cavalry, with 100 guns, protected an immense convoy of mules, waggons, sheep, and oxen, several miles in length. In support of this movement French forces also advanced on the north and south of the Tagus as a diversion,

* It has been before noticed (p. 184) that at the blockade of Almeida on the right bank of the Coa he crossed to the right bank to maintain the blockade.

Sept. 23-25, 1811

Girard to Merida near Badajoz, and others to Truxillo and Plasencia.

Wellington now concentrated his forces closer to Ciudad-Rodrigo, the greater part of them being on heights on the left bank of the Agueda, but still watching its course above and below the fortress, and also the pass of Perales. His centre was near El Bodon, and the Light Division was thrown across the river to the right bank, south of Ciudad-Rodrigo, with directions to cross the river and fall back on Fuente Guinaldo if attacked in force.

On September 23rd and 24th Marmont moved forward, and placing some troops to observe the Allies, introduced the convoy, meeting in this with no opposition from Wellington, who considered that it would not be judicious to incur, in order to prevent this, the risk, and possibly heavy loss, which a battle on the right of the Agueda, and against such superior forces, would involve.

COMBATS OF EL BODON AND ALDEA DE PONTE

September 25th and 27th, 1811

On the 25th, Marmont, instead of falling back after relieving the fortress, as he had originally (it is said) intended, determined to cross the Agueda and ascertain the position and strength of the Allies. A large force under Montbrun, with a powerful body of cavalry, passed the river close to the south of Ciudad-Rodrigo, turned the El Bodon heights, cutting off temporarily two regiments to the north of El Bodon, and pressed the Allies back towards Fuente Guinaldo.

Wellington's position at El Bodon was far from a secure one. Not counting a division detached towards the pass of Perales, the Allies, with only 35,000 men, were extended over some twenty miles of ground, the Light Division being separated from the remainder of the force by the River Agueda; while Marmont (with Dorsenne), numbering some 60,000, was at Ciudad-Rodrigo within a distance varying from three to eight miles of the positions occupied. Sept. 25-27, 1811

But Marmont was not aware of the advantage which he held, and his attack was made with but a portion of his force, so that Wellington's confident front and the gallantry of the troops saved them on this occasion, as on several others, from any very serious loss.

In the combat of El Bodon the 5th and 77th Regiments,* two weak battalions formed in one square, retired for a considerable distance over exposed ground in the face of the whole of Montbrun's cavalry, which failed to break them, and Wellington subsequently took up another position on the ridge of Fuente Guinaldo.

Here he remained for some hours longer than he otherwise would have done, largely because the Light Division had not yet joined him, and he would not leave it isolated beyond the Agueda. Napier states that Craufurd, who was in command of it, always eager to fight and reluctant to retreat, should, having regard to Wellington's position, have fallen back more quickly and directly to Guinaldo; the result of his slow retirement being

* Now the Northumberland Fusiliers and 2nd Batt. Middlesex Regt.

Sept. 25-28, 1811

that Wellington, with under 15,000 men—his divisions not having yet concentrated—had to face for several hours a very superior force of Marmont's army at Fuente Guinaldo.

Enterprise on Marmont's part would here have enabled him to attack to great advantage; but, ignorant of the true situation, he delayed for his whole force to assemble. From mid-day of the 25th until midnight of the 26th Wellington remained firm in his position, by which time Marmont (with Dorsenne) had concentrated 60,000 men in his front. But then, his divisions having either joined him or been directed to Aldea de Ponte, he fell back in the night to a good position near that village.

Here on the 27th there was a sharp engagement, and Aldea de Ponte itself was twice lost and twice retaken by the Allies; after which Wellington retired still further to a loop of the Coa, where he could only be attacked upon a narrow front. Marmont, having become short of provisions, now declined further battle, and on the 28th the French forces separated. Dorsenne returned to Salamanca, and Marmont to the valley of the Tagus, while Wellington went into cantonments on both banks of the Coa, the blockade of Ciudad-Rodrigo being partially kept up by the Spaniards.

There is no doubt that for a time Wellington's position, both at El Bodon and at Fuente Guinaldo, was one of some danger, which probably no one realised as clearly as he did himself.

Marmont, when he afterwards became aware of the weak strength in which his adversary had been facing him in the latter position, and of the situation from which the Light Division had escaped, is said to have exclaimed (alluding to Napoleon's fortune), "And Wellington's star; it also is bright!" * Sept. 29, 1811

But it can be readily understood that Wellington would risk much, rather than imperil by his own retirement the safe junction with him of the Light Division; and another reason why he remained so long on the positions taken up, is thus given in his despatch of September 29th, 1811: "As the reports, as usual, were so various in regard to the enemy's real strength, it was necessary that I should see their army, in order that the people of this country might be convinced that to raise the blockade was a measure of necessity."

Napier, in commenting upon these movements, and although he considers that Wellington had better have fallen back from El Bodon sooner than he did, says of his bold stand at Guinaldo: "The resolution" (*i.e.* to remain until the Light Division was safe) "was one of those daring strokes of genius which the ordinary rules of art were never made to control . . . Lord Wellington's conduct at Guinaldo was above rules."

Wellington in his despatch above referred to (of September 29th, 1811), expresses no disapproval of Craufurd's action, although from various accounts of the war it seems certain that the latter's

* Napier's *History of the Peninsular War*, 1834, vol. iv. p. 248.

Oct. 1811 reluctance to retreat from the right bank of the river had caused him much anxiety.

He speaks in the following strong words of commendation of certain regiments in the affair of El Bodon: "The conduct of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Regiment, affords a memorable example of what the steadiness and discipline of the troops, and their confidence in their officers, can effect in the most difficult and trying situations. The conduct of the 77th Regiment, under the command of Colonel Bromhead, was equally good, and I have never seen a more determined attack than was made by the whole of the enemy's cavalry, with every advantage of the assistance of a superior artillery, and repulsed by these two weak battalions." The conduct of the 1st (German) Hussars and 11th Light Dragoons (now 11th Hussars) was also much praised.

HILL'S OPERATIONS

Surprise of Arroyo dos Molinos

Towards the middle of October, 1811, after the affairs near Fuente Guinaldo, a French division under Girard crossed the Guadiana at Merida, and inflicted great annoyance on the northern districts of Estramadura. Hill therefore proposed to Wellington to operate against Girard in conjunction with the Spaniards, which was approved, under certain conditions limiting the extent of the movement.

While on the march, Hill, having discovered that Girard had gone from the position he

was understood to be in, and was at Arroyo dos Molinos, west of Truxillo, determined to surprise him there if possible. Oct. 27, 1811

By the evening of October 27th, 1811, he reached, in very tempestuous wet weather, a point within four miles of the French, who were entirely unconscious of his vicinity. The adjoining villages were surrounded to prevent warning being given by the inhabitants; and the troops, having remained in the fields all night through a violent hail-storm, moved off towards morning in complete silence, and surprised Arroyo dos Molinos at dawn—the more easily as the French pickets had their backs turned to the direction from which Hill approached, in order to escape the violence of the wind and rain.

A force having been previously detached, by a wide circuit, to interpose between the French and Truxillo, the leading brigade burst upon the village, the 71st and 92nd playing, "Hey, Johnny Cope, are ye waking yet?" The enemy made a short resistance; then, panic-stricken, fled in utter confusion to the mountains, throwing down arms and accoutrements, or surrendering themselves prisoners.

General Hill writes thus to his sister: "PORTALEGRE, *November 5th*, 1811.—I have time merely to inform you that on the morning of the 28th at daybreak I succeeded in surprising, attacking, and annihilating the French corps under General Girard at Arroyo dos Molinos. The enemy's force, when attacked, consisted of about 3,000 infantry, 1,600 cavalry and artillery. The result is the

Dec. 1811 capture of one general (Bron), one colonel (the Prince d'Aremberg), 35 lieutenant-colonels and inferior officers, 1,400 prisoners, and probably 500 killed. The others dispersed, having thrown away their arms; we have also got all the enemy's artillery, baggage, and magazines—in short, everything that belonged to the corps." *

In fact, the surprise was most successful and complete, and for it General Hill was made a Knight of the Bath, becoming Sir Rowland Hill.

"Arroyo dos Molinos," as a battle-honour, is borne by the 34th (now 1st Battalion, the Border) Regiment.

Defence of Tarifa

An indirect object of the operations of Hill, just described, had also been to draw off the French from an enterprise they were undertaking (in October, 1811) against Tarifa—the southern point of Spain near Gibraltar, which was occupied by the Allies.

This enterprise the French had not been successful in, but it must be here mentioned that it was again renewed in December, 1811, when an assault on Tarifa, which was not a very strong place, was most gallantly repulsed by the Allies (December 31st), with heavy loss to the assailants, who then withdrew.

For this defence "Tarifa" is borne as a battle-honour by the 47th and 87th Regiments (now respectively the 1st Battalion Loyal North Lan-

* *Life of Lord Hill*, by the Rev. Edwin Sidney, 1845, p. 172.

cashire Regiment and 1st Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers).* Dec. 1811

The value of Tarifa to the Allies is best shown by the following extract from an intercepted despatch of Soult's, in which he wrote thus of the importance of the French capturing it.

"The taking of Tarifa will be more hurtful to the English and to the defenders of Cadiz than the taking of Alicante or even Badajoz, where I cannot go without first securing my left, and taking Tarifa."

In short, the post of Tarifa was an assistance to the Allies in the defence of Cadiz; and the two places together endangered Soult's left and rear, should he move from Seville towards Badajoz. Napier ascribes great merit for the plan of its defence to Captain (afterwards Sir Charles) Smith, of the Royal Engineers.

What was done in the closing months of the year 1811 will be more conveniently touched upon in the next chapter, forming as it largely does the preparation for the campaign which was to open in 1812.

But it may be useful to say, at this point, that, before reading fuller detailed histories of the operations of 1811, it will be found an advantage to consider the dates of the various occurrences, and so get the connection of the main events clearly arranged in the mind.

The fighting during certain months of this

* A portion of the 2nd Battalion 95th Rifles also took part in this defence.

campaign was so universal, and Wellington appears in person near Ciudad-Rodrigo and Badajoz, places widely distant, at dates so close together, that the accounts may at times seem confusing.

It should be noticed that Wellington, after Massena's retreat, invested Almeida (April 9th); then went south to Beresford, reconnoitred Badajoz with him, and prepared to besiege it (April 22nd, 1st English siege); then returned to Almeida and fought Massena at Fuentes d'Onor (May 3rd), and got possession of Almeida (May 10th); then returned to Badajoz to Beresford, who in his absence had raised the siege, and on May 16th fought Soult at Albuhera; then resumed the siege of Badajoz (2nd English siege), but was compelled to retire without taking that fortress (June, 1811); after this, returned north and blockaded Ciudad-Rodrigo (August 10th, 1811), which was relieved by Marmont, September 24th, 1811; and (subsequent to the combats of El Bodon, etc., and retirement of Marmont) resumed the blockade (September 29th, 1811).

COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGN

The rapid manner with which Wellington, when Massena had been driven out of Portugal, passed at once from the defensive to the offensive is striking. Compared to the numbers which Napoleon (who it was now thought would personally conduct the war in Spain) could bring against him, his army was small, and it may confidently be said that many a leader would have been contented with the success achieved, and concentrated all

his energies upon strengthening the defences of Lisbon and Portugal while awaiting events.

Wellington, however, at once moved against Almeida, Ciudad-Rodrigo, and Badajoz, though he failed at this period to take the two latter strongholds.

It has been considered that too much was here attempted, and that it would have been wiser to have concentrated his efforts against Ciudad-Rodrigo alone; and, until it fell, have attempted nothing towards Badajoz, beyond observing it and Soult's corps.

But Wellington had cogent motives for his action. The reduction of one fortress alone would not have been sufficient for the offensive plans he had in view, for reasons which are fully entered into in discussing the next campaign (of 1812). In addition to this it formed the very essence of his military policy to keep each French Corps* employed and concentrated in their own provinces, giving them as little opportunity as possible either to disperse or to unite with each other. This policy was largely based upon the weakness of the French system of supplying their troops with food, which Wellington very clearly realised. We shall enter into it more fully in the next chapter, so that it is enough to say now that when a French Corps was able to disperse it could live and support itself much more easily than when it was concentrated. Massed together, it found it

* A "Corps," in this sense, means a "Corps d'Armée"—a large body of troops, comprising two or more divisions, and under the command of a marshal or general of very high rank.

difficult to procure sufficient food, and the guerilla bands attacked its communications; but when for any great object two Corps managed to unite, they then constituted a most formidable body of troops, to meet which Wellington was compelled to assemble in force, relinquishing the prosecution of his own plans to frustrate those of the French.

Colonel (afterwards Sir John) Jones, R.E., in his *Journals and Sieges in Spain*, writes: "The enemy during this campaign" (1811) "had a great numerical superiority over the Allies, and he would no doubt have reaped the due advantage therefrom, had not every movement on the part of Lord Wellington been conducted with a happy reference to the difference of the commissariat of the two armies . . . the French have no magazines; they subsist by the daily contributions they levy, and never, therefore, can remain long united in a large body."

Bessierès, also, writes thus to Berthier from Valladolid on June 6th, 1811: "The Army of the North is composed of 44,000 men, it is true; but if you draw together 20,000 the communications are instantly lost, and the insurrection makes the greatest progress."

The difficulty of feeding their men when concentrated thus greatly hampered the French leaders; and Wellington's plan of attacking important points, widely separated, at one time, was ably directed to compel the French to concentrate or lose those points, and also to interfere with their various Corps co-operating together. No other policy could have been equally effectual in enabling him to oppose such superior numbers, and it may

be added also that by thus giving employment to the French marshals and generals in their own districts, he afforded them very plausible pretexts for not going to each other's aid, which their mutual jealousies made them occasionally disposed to take advantage of. It was a much more far-reaching policy than a merely defensive one.*

Writing from Frenada, October 2nd, 1811, to the Right Hon. W. W. Pole, as to the affairs near Fuente Guinaldo, Wellington thus explains why he had not been able to assemble a larger force in the north to carry on the blockade of Ciudad-Rodrigo in the summer†: "The reason why I could bring no more than 40,000 men to maintain the blockade was that I am at all times obliged to keep a large corps on the south of the Tagus. The reason of this is that the enemy are at Seville nearer to Lisbon than I am.‡ However, although I have been obliged to give up the blockade, we have done some good by this operation; we have saved Galicia till now, and likewise the partisan Mina.§ I don't despair of being able yet to save Galicia and Mina, by keeping in employment, in

* Wellington always paid great attention to commissariat matters. He used to say of himself that, though he might not be much of a general, he was the "best commissariat officer" in his army; and his practical mind fully realised how soon a badly fed army deteriorates.

† *Supplementary Despatches of the Duke of Wellington,* edited by his son, 1866, vol. vii. p. 221.

‡ The Tagus, too, especially in the dry season, could be forded at certain points; and the French had now a bridge at Almaraz. They could cross the Guadiana also.

§ Dorsenne had been threatening Galicia, and Mina, a very active guerilla chieftain, had been so troublesome in Navarre and the north, by attacking the French communications, that great efforts were being made to put him down.

attending to us, all the disposable troops which might be employed to attack either."

By December, 1811, the French held possession of almost all the fortified places of Spain, including the important fortresses of *Ciudad-Rodrigo* and *Badajoz*.

On the other hand, the Allies had defeated every effort of theirs to hold Portugal (for Junot, Soult, and Massena had all failed to conquer that country), and were in possession of the Portuguese fortresses of *Almeida* and *Elvas*.

The continuance of the war was each year making it more and more difficult for the French to subsist in the exhausted districts which had been the scene of the operations of their large armies, and they soon found themselves compelled to scatter their troops widely in search of food. It is upon this fact that the important events of the year 1812, which we are about to discuss, mainly turned.

At the close of 1811 the character of the struggle had in short begun to alter, and "Wellington with his sixty thousand British and Portuguese soldiers appeared on the offensive in the midst of one hundred and fifty thousand enemies" (Alison's *History of Europe*).

"A limit had now been placed upon Napoleon's conquests; a French army never entered Portugal again. Spain was thenceforward to be the theatre of war, and Wellington had brought to a triumphal issue a defence which astounded soldiers and statesmen throughout the civilised world."*

* *Wellington*, by W. O'Connor Morris, 1904.

At this period he himself thus sums up the position of affairs.

"The contest is expensive, and affords but little or no hopes of success except by tiring the French out. After all, military success probably could not reasonably be expected in a contest between the powers of the Peninsula and Great Britain on one side and the French on the other, which had begun by the French seizing the armies, the fortified places, the arms, and the resources of the Peninsula. These are circumstances to which the people do not advert in general, but they bear upon every event of the contest. We have already in some degree altered the nature of the war, and of the French military system. They are now in a great measure on the defensive, and are carrying on a war of magazines.* They will soon, if they have not already, come upon the resources of France; and as soon as that is the case, you may depend upon it the war will not last long." †

Before closing this chapter it must be said that those who would realise to any correct extent what Wellington had accomplished by the close of the year 1811, must bear in mind that in addition to his military responsibilities he had to aid the Cabinet at home in overcoming bitter opposition to his plans for the war, and to meet himself continual intrigue, jealousy, and obstruction in Portugal

* Meaning apparently that by forcing the French to concentrate he had altered their power to live day by day upon the supplies in their neighbourhood, and that the contest was turning now upon the question of whether their leaders could create and fill magazines, and thus keep the French armies assembled, as Wellington could his.

† *Wellington Despatches*, vol. viii. (Ed. 1838), pp. 245–6.

and Spain. His despatches and correspondence show that to cope with the French, and organize and lead his army, keeping it even tolerably fed, equipped, and paid, formed but a small part of the anxious labour which devolved upon him. Political, financial, and commercial questions of a general nature, many of them of an intricate character, had all to be dealt with by him in the midst of his field operations, from his cantonments or his tent, and his letters as to these form state papers showing exceptional breadth of grasp, and power. It will give some idea of the description of many of these questions to mention simply one—viz. whether England, as the ally of Spain, was not bound in honour to assist her to reconquer the Spanish colonies which had revolted against the home government, as well as aid her against France? In view of England's efforts to reconquer her own revolted American colonies thirty years before and their result, together with the Spanish feeling upon the points involved, this was a question not to be easily or hastily dealt with; but Napier, alluding to Wellington's memorandum in reply written from the field, says*: "It was on such occasions that all his power of mind was displayed, and his manner of treating this question proved that in political, and even in commercial affairs, his reach of thought and enlarged conceptions immeasurably surpassed those of the Cabinet he served, and when we consider that his opinions, stated in 1811, have since been verified in all points to the very letter,

* Napier's *History of the Peninsular War* (1834), vol. iv. p. 156.

it is impossible not to be filled with admiration of his foresight and judgment."

It was one of the smallest of Wellington's worries and annoyances that a vote of thanks for this or that victory was opposed at home; Talavera, the retreat to the lines, Fuentes d'Onor, etc., belittled or censured; and the passage of the Douro deemed an easy feat.

The scope of these pages prevents us from enlarging further on this subject; but in even the briefest account of the war it is one which should be touched upon, for probably no British commander in the field has ever had to contend with greater difficulties upon the whole, taking the civil with the military, than Wellington in the years 1809, 1810, and 1811 *; and it is probably not too much to say that had his personal exertions flagged in any degree, or his health failed, the struggle against the French in the Peninsula would soon have been abandoned.

Possessing, fortunately, an iron nerve and constitution, he bore the strain, and stood, to the end, an unshaken tower of strength to the nations whose cause he served.

* This is all very fully brought out in *Wellington's Operations in the Peninsula* (1808-14), by Captain Lewis Butler, late King's Royal Rifle Corps. (1904.)

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